

THE
VANITY
OF THIS
Mortal Life:
OR, OF
MAN,

Considered only in his
Present Mortal State.

By J. HOWE, M. A.

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1010

To the deservedly honoured, **JOHN UPTON** of *Lupton*, Esq; with the many surviving Branches formerly sprung out of that Religious Family, and the Worthy Consorts of any of them.

Since it is the lot of the following Pages to be exposed to publick view; There is somewhat of justice in it, to your selves or me, that the world do also know where in divers of you have contributed thereto; that if any thing redound hence to publick advantage, it may be understood to be owing in part to you; or, if it shall be reckon'd an useless trouble, in this way to represent things, so obvious to common notice, and whereof so much is already said, all the blame of the publication be not imputed (as it doth not belong) to me only.

But I must here crave your excuse, that, on this account, I give you a narrative of what (for the most part) you already know, and may possibly not delight to remember; both because it is now become convenient that others should know it too, and not necessary to be put into a distinct Preface; and because to your selves the review of those less pleasing passages may be attended with a fruit which may be some recompence for their want of pleasure.

The Epistle

* Mr. Anthony Up-ton, the Son of John Up-ton, of Lupton, Esq;

Therefore give the Reader leave to take notice, and let it not be grievous to you that I re-mind you, That after this your near Relation * (whose death gave the occasion of the ensuing Meditations) had from his youth lived between twenty and thirty years of his age in Spain, your joint-importunity had at length obtained from him a promise of returning ; whereof, when you were in somewhat a near expectation, a sudden Disease in so few days landed him in another world, that the first notice you had of his death or sickness, was by the arrival of that Vessel (clad in mourning-attire), which, according to his own desire in his sickness, brought over the deserted body to its native place of Lupton ; that thence it might find a Grave, where it first received a Soul ; and obtain a Mansion in the Earth, where first it became one to a reasonable Spirit.

A little before this time, the desire of an interview among your selves (which the distance of your habitations permitted not to be frequent) had induced divers of you to appoint a meeting at some middle place, whereby the trouble of a long journey might be conveniently shared among you.

But, before that agreed resolution could have its accomplishment, this sad and most unexpected Event intervening, altered the place, the occasion, and design of your meeting ; but effected the thing it self, and brought together no less than Twenty, the Brothers and Sisters of the deceased, or their Consorts ; besides his many Nephews and Nieces, and other Relations to the mournful solemnity of the Interment. Within the time of our being together upon this sad account, this passage

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Sage of the Psalmist here insisted on, came into discourse among us; being introduced by an occasion, which (though then, it may be, unknown to the most of you) was somewhat rare, and not unworthy observation; viz. That one of your selves having been some time before surpris'd with an unusual sadness, join'd with an expectation of ill tidings, upon no known cause, had so urgent an inculcation of these words, as not to be able to forbear the revolving them much of the former part of that day, in the latter part whereof the first notice was brought to that place of this so near a Relations decease.

Certain Months after, some of you with whom I was then conversant in London, importuned me to have somewhat from me in writing upon that Subject. Whereto I at length agreed, with a cautionary request, That it might not come into many hands, but might remain (as the occasion was) among your selves. Nor will I deny it to have been some inducement to me to apply my thoughts to that Theme, that it had been so suggested as was said. For such presages and abodings, as that above-mentioned, may reasonably be thought to owe themselves to some more steady and universal Principle than Casualty, or the party's own Imagination: By whose more noble recommendation (that such a gloomy Premonition might carry with it not what should only afflict, but also instruct and teach) this Subject did seem offered to our meditation.

Accordingly therefore, after my return to the place of my abode, I hastily drew up the substance of the following Discourse; which, a year ago, I transmitted into their hands who desired it from

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me, without reserving to my self any Copy. Hereby it became difficult to me, presently to comply (besides divers considerations I might have against the thing it self) with that joint request of some of you (in a Letter, which my removal into another Kingdom occasioned to come long after to my hands), that I would consent these Papers might be made publick. For as I have reason to be conscious to my self of disadvantages enough to discourage any undertaking of that kind; so I am more especially sensible, that so cursory and superficial a management of a subject so very important (though its private occasion and design at first might render it excusable to those few friends for whom it was meant) cannot but be liable to the hard censure (not to say the contempt) of many whom Discourses of this kind should more designedly serve. And therefore, though my willingness to be serviceable in keeping alive the apprehension and expectation of another state, my value of your judgments who conceive what is here done may be useful thereto, and my peculiar respects to your selves, the members and appendants of a Family to which (besides some relation) I have many obligations and endearments, do prevail with me not wholly to deny; Yet pardon me that I have suspended my consent to this publication, till I should have a Copy transmitted to me from some of you, for my necessary review of so hasty a production, that I might not offer to the view of the world, what, after I had penn'd it, had scarce passed my own. And now, after so long an expectation, those Papers are but this last week come to my hands: I here return them with little or

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no alteration; save, that what did more directly concern the occasion, towards the close, is transferred hither; but with the addition of almost all the directive part of the use: Which I submit together to your pleasure and dispose.

And I shall now take the liberty to add, my design in consenting to this request of yours (and I hope the same of you in making it) is not to erect a Monument to the memory of the Deceased, (which how little doth it signifie!) nor to spread the fame of your Family, (though the visible blessing of God upon it, in the fruitfulness, piety, and mutual love, wherein it hath flourished for some generations, do challenge observation, both as to those branches of it which grow in their own more natural soil, and those, as I have now occasion to take further notice, that I find to have been transplanted into another Country): But that such into whose hands this little Treatise shall fall, may be induced to consider the true end of their beings; to examine and discuss the matter more thoroughly with themselves, what it may or can be supposed such a sort of Creatures was made and placed on this Earth for: That when they shall have reasoned themselves into a settled apprehension of the worthy and important Ends they are capable of attaining, and are visibly designed to, they may be seized with a noble disdain of living beneath themselves and the bounty of their Creator.

It is obvious to common observation, how flagrant and intense a zeal men are often wont to express for their personal reputation, the honour of their Families, yea, or for the glory of their Nation: But how few are acted by that more laudable
and

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and enlarged zeal for the dignity of Mankind?

How few are they that resent the common and vile depression of their own species? Or that, while in things of lightest consideration they strive with emulous endeavour, that they and their relatives may excel other men, do reckon it a reproach if in matters of the greatest consequence they and all men should not excel Beasts? How few that are not contented to confine their utmost designs and expectations within the same narrow limits? Through a mean and inglorious self-despiciency confessing in themselves (to the Truths and their own wrong) an incapacity of greater things; and with most injurious falsehood, proclaiming the same of all Mankind besides.

If he that, amidst the hazards of a dubious War, betrays the Interest and Honour of his Country be justly infamous, and thought worthy severest punishments; I see not why a debauch'd Sensualist, that lives as if he were created only to indulge his appetite; that so vilifies the notion of man, as if he were made but to eat and drink, and sport, to please only his sense and fancy; that in this time and state of conflict between the powers of this present world, and those of the world to come, quits his Party, bids open defiance to Humanity, abjures the Noble Principles and Ends, forsakes the Laws and Society of all that are worthy to be esteemed Men, abandons the common and rational hope of Mankind concerning a future immortality, and herds himself among brute Creatures; I say, I see not why such a one should not be scorn'd and abhor'd as a Traitor to the whole Race and Nation of reasonable Creatures, as a fugitive from the

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Tents, and deserter of the common interest of men; and that, both for the vileness of his practice, and the danger of his example.

And who, that hath open eyes, beholds not the dreadful instances and increase of this defection? When it hath prevailed to that degree already, that in Civiliz'd, yea, in Christian Countries, (as they yet affect to be call'd) the practice is become fashionable and in credit, which can square with no other Principle than the disbelief of a future state, as if it were but a meer Poetick or (at best) a Political Fiction. And, as if so impudent infidelity would pretend not to a connivence only but a sanction, 'tis reckon'd an odd and uncouth thing for a man to live as if he thought otherwise; and a great presumption to seem to dissent from the prophane infidel Crew. As if the matter were already formally determined in the behalf of Irreligion, and the Doctrine of the life to come had been clearly condemned in open Council as a detestable Heresie. For what Tenet was ever more exploded and hooted at, than that practice is which alone agrees with this? Or what series or course of repeated Villanies can ever be more ignominious than (in vulgar estimate) a course of life so transacted as doth become the expectation of a blessed immortality? And what, after so much written and spoken by persons of all times and Religions for the immortality of the human Soul, and so common an acknowledgment thereof by Pagans, Mahometans, Jews, and Christians, Is man now at last condemn'd and doom'd to a perpetual death, as it were, by the consent and suffrage even of men; and that too without trial or hearing; and not by the reason

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reason of men, but their lusts only? As if (with a loud and violent cry) they would assassinate and stifle this belief and hope, but not judge it. And shall the matter be thus given up as hopeless; and the victory be yielded to prosperous wickedness, and a too successful conspiracy of vile Miscreants against both their Maker and their own Stock and Race?

One would think whosoever have remaining in them any conscience of obligation and duty to the common Parent and Author of our Beings, any remembrance of our Divine Original, any breathings of our ancient hope, any sense of human honour, any resentments of so vile an indignity to the nature of man, any spark of a just and generous indignation for so opprobrious a contumely to their own Kind and Order in the Creation, should oppose themselves with an Heroick vigour to this treacherous and unnatural combination.

And let us (my worthy Friends) be provoked, in our several capacities, to do our parts herein; and, at least, so to live and converse in this world, that the course and tenour of our lives may import an open asserting of our hopes in another; and may let men see we are not ashamed to own the belief of a life to come. Let us by a patient continuance in well-doing (how low designs soever others content themselves to pursue) seek honour, glory, and immortality to our selves; and by our avowed warrantable ambition in this pursuit, justify our great and bountiful Creator, who hath made us not in vain, but for so high and great things: And glorify our blessed Redeemer, who amidst the gloomy and disconsolate darkness of this wretched world,
when

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when it was overspread with the shadow of death, hath brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel. Let us labour both to feel and express the power of that Religion which hath the inchoation of the (participated) divine life for its principle, and the perfection and eternal perpetuation thereof for its scope and end.

Nor let the time that hath since elapsed be found to have worn out with you the (useful) impressions which this monitory surprising instance of our Mortality did at first make. But give me leave to inculcate from it what was said to you when the occasion was fresh and new: That we labour more deeply to apprehend Gods dominion over his Creatures; and that he made us principally for himself, and for ends that are to be compassed in the future state; not for the temporary satisfaction and pleasure of one another in this world.

Otherwise Providence had never been guilty of such a Solecism, to take out one from a Family long famous for so exemplary mutual love, and dispose him into so remote a part, not permitting to most of his nearest Relations the enjoyment of him for almost thirty years (and therein all the flower) of his age, and at last, when you were expecting the man, send you home the breathless frame wherein he lived.

Yet it was not contemptible that you had that, and that dying (as Joseph) in a strange Land, he gave, also, commandment concerning his bones; that though in his life he was (mostly) separated from his brethren, he might in death be gathered to his fathers.

It was some evidence (though you wanted not better)

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better) that amidst the Traffick of Spain, he more esteemed the Religion of England, and therefore would rather his dust should associate with theirs, with whom also he would rather his spirit should.

But whatever it did evidence, it occasion'd so much, that you had that so general meeting with one another, which otherwise probably you would not have had, nor are likely again to have, (so hath Providence scattered you) in this world; and that it proved a more serious meeting than otherwise it might: for however it might blamelessly have been designed to have met together at a cheerful Table, God saw it fitter to order the meeting at a mournful Grave; and to make the House that received you (the native place to many of you) the House of mourning rather than of feasting. The one would have had more quick relishes of a present pleasure, but the other was likely to yield the more lasting sense of an after-profit. Nor was it an ill errand to come together (though from afar for divers of you) to learn to dye. As you might, by being so sensibly put in mind of it, though you did not see that very part acted it self.

And accept this endeavour, to further you in your preparations for that change, as some testimony of the remembrance I retain of your most obliging respects and love, and of my still continuing

ANTRIM,
April 12.
1671.

Your affectionate and
respectful Kinsman,
and Servant in our
common Lord,

J. HOWE.

THE
Vanity of M^AN
AS
MORTAL.

PSAL. 89. 47, 48.

Remember how short my time is : wherefore hast thou made all men in vain ? What man is he that liveth , and shall not see death ? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave ? Selah.

WE are not concerned to be particular and curious in the enquiry, touching the special reference or occasion of the foregoing complaints, from the 37 verse. It is enough to take notice, for our present purpose, that besides the evil which had already befallen the Plaintiff, a farther danger nearly threatned him, that carried death in the face of it, and suggested somewhat frightful apprehensions of his mortal state, which drew from him

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him this quick and sensible petition in reference to his own private concern, [*Remember how short my time is*], and did presently direct his eye with a sudden glance from the view of his own, to reflect on the common condition of man, whereof he expresses his resentment, first, in an hasty expostulation with God, [*Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain*]? Then, secondly, in a pathetick discourse with himself, representing the reason of that rough charge, [*What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver, &c.*] *q. d.* When I add to the consideration of my short time, that of dying-mankind, and behold a dark and deadly shade universally overspreading the world, the whole species of human Creatures vanishing, quitting the stage round about me, and disappearing almost as soon as they shew themselves: Have I not a fair and plausible ground for that (seemingly rude) challenge? Why is there so unaccountable a *Phænomenon*, such a Creature made to no purpose? The noblest part of this inferior Creation brought forth into being without any imaginable design? I know not how to untie the knot, upon this only view of the case, or avoid the absurdity. 'Tis hard sure to design the supposal, (of what it may yet seem hard to suppose), *that all men were made in vain.*

It appears, the expostulation was somewhat passionate, and did proceed upon the sudden view of this disconsolate case, very abstractly considered, and by it self only; and that

Man as mortal.

that he did not in that instant look beyond it to a better and more comfortable scene of things. An eye bleer'd with present sorrow, sees not so far, nor comprehends so much at one view, as it would at another time, or as it doth, presently, when the tear is wipt out, and its own beams have clear'd it up.

Wee see he did quickly look further, and had got a more lightfom prospect, when in the next words we find him contemplating Gods *sworn loving-kindness unto David*. The truth and stability whereof he at the same time expressly acknowledges, while only the form of his speech doth but seem to import a doubt [*where are they*]? But yet [*they were sworn in truth*]. Upon which argument he had much enlarged in the former part of the *Psalm*; and it still lay deep in his Soul, though he were now a little diverted from the present consideration of it.

Which, since it turns the Scales with him, it will be needful to enquire into the weight and import of it. Nor have we any reason to think, that *David* was either so little a Prophet or a Saint, as in his own thoughts to refer those magnificent things (the instances of that loving-kindness confirm'd by Oath, which he recites from the 19 verse of the *Psalm* to the 38, as spoken from the mouth of God, and declared to him by vision) to the dignity of his own person, and the grandeur and perpetuity of his Kingdom; as if it were ultimately meant of himself, that God would *make him his first-born, higher than the Kings of the earth*, (when there were divers greater Kings, and (in com-

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v. 29.
v. 36,
37.

parison of the little spot over which he reigned) a vastly spreading Monarchy that still overtopped him all his time, (as the same and successive Monarchies did his Successors); or that it was intended of the secular glory and stability of his Throne and Family; that God would make them to endure for ever, and be as the days of heaven; that they should be as the Sun before him, and be establish'd for ever as the Moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.

Act. 2. 30

v. 28,
34.

v. 39.

That God himself meant it not so, experience and the event of things hath shown; and that these predictions cannot otherwise have had their accomplishment, than in the succession of the spiritual and everlasting Kingdom of the Messiah (whom God raised up out of his loins to sit on his throne) unto his temporal Kingdom. Wherein 'tis therefore ended by perfection rather than corruption. These Prophecies being then made good, not in the kind which they literally imported, but in another (far more noble) kind. In which sense God's Covenant with him must be understood, which he insists on so much in this Psalm, even unto that degree, as to challenge God upon it, as if in the present course of his providence he were now about to make it void: Though he sufficiently expresses his confidence both before and after, that this could never be. But 'tis plain it hath been made void long enough ago, in the subversion of David's Kingdom, and in that we see his Throne and Family not been establish'd for ever, not endured as the days of heaven; if those words had no other than their obvious

obvious and literal meaning. And if any to clear the truth of God, would alledg the wickedness of his posterity, first making a breach and disobliging him, this is prevented by what we find inserted in reference to this very case: *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, &c. Then will I visit their iniquity with the rod, &c. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. All which is solemnly sealed up with this, Once have I sworn in my holiness, that I will not lye unto David.* So that, they that will make a scruple to accuse the Holy God of falshood, in that which with so much solemnity he hath promised and sworn, must not make any to admit his further intendment in these words. And that he had a further (even a mystical and spiritual) intendment in this Covenant with David, is yet more fully evident from that of the Prophet *Isaiah; Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, &c. Incline your ear and come to me. And I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander, &c. What means this universal invitation to all thirsty persons, with the subjoined encouragement of making with them an *everlasting Covenant*, (the same which we have here, no doubt, as to the principal parts, and which we find him mentioning also, 2 Sam. 23. 5. with characters exactly corresponding to these of the Prophet), *even the sure*

mercies of David? The meaning sure could not be, that they should be all Secular Kings and Princes, and their posterity after them for ever; which we see is the verbal sound and tenor of this Covenant.

And now since it is evident God intended a mystery in this Covenant, we may be as well assured he intended no deceit, and that he designed not a delusion to *David* by the vision in which he gave it. Can we think he went about to gratifie him with a solemn fiction, and draw him into a false and fanciful faith; or so to hide his meaning from him, as to tempt him into the belief of what he never meant? And to what purpose was this so special Revelation *by vision*, if it were not to be understood truly, at least, if not yet perfectly and fully? It is left us therefore to collect, that *David* was not wholly uninstructed how to refer all this to the Kingdom of the *Messiah*. And he hath given sufficient testimony in that part of sacred Writ, whereof God used him as a Pen-man, that he was of another temper than to place the sum and chief of his expectations and consolations in his own and his posterities worldly greatness. And to put us out of doubt, our Saviour, (who well knew his Spirit) expressly enough tells us, that *he in spirit called him Lord*, when he said, *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy foot-stool*. A plain discovery how he understood Gods revelation touching the future concernments of his Kingdom (and the Covenant relating thereto), viz. as a figure and type of Christ, who

Matt. 22.

Psal. 110.

who must reign till all his enemies be subdued.
 Nor was he in that ignorance about the nature and design of Christs Kingdom, but that he understood its reference to another world, and state of things, even beyond all the successions of time, and the mortal race of men, so as to have his eye fixed upon the happy eternity which a joyful resurrection must introduce, and whereof Christs resurrection should be the great and most assuring pledg. And of this we need no fuller an evidence than the express words of the Apostle St. Peter, who after he had cited those lofty triumphant strains of David, Psal. 16. 8, 9, 10, 11, *I have set the Lord always before me : because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth : my flesh also shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (or in the state of darkness), neither wilt thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life. In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.* All which, he tells us, was spoken [concerning Christ]. He more expressly subjoins, *that David being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.* He seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, (it appears he spake not at random, but as knowing and seeing before what he spake), *That his soul was not left in hell, &c.* nor can we think he thus rejoices in anothers resurrection, forgetting his own.

Act. 2.
v. 25, &c.

v. 25.

v. 26.

v. 31.

Act. 13.
v. 32,
33,
34.

And yet we have a further evidence from the Apostle St. Paul, who affirms, *that the promise made to the fathers, God had fulfilled to their children, in that he had raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption; he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.* Which it is now apparent, must be understood of eternal mercies; such as Christs resurrection and triumph over the grave doth ensure to us. He therefore lookt upon what was spoken concerning his Kingdom here, as spoken ultimately of Christs, the Kingdom whereby he governs and conducts his faithful Subjects through all the troubles of Life and terrours of Death (through both whereof he himself as their Kings and Leader hath shewn the way) unto eternal Blessedness; and upon the Covenant made with him as the Covenant of God in Christ, concerning that Blessedness and the requisites thereto. And (to say no more in this argument) how otherwise can we conceive he should have thatfulness of consolation in this Covenant when he lay a-dying, as we find him expressing, *2 Sam. 23. 5. (for these were some of the last words of David; as we see v. 1.) He hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.* What so great joy and solace could a dying man take in a Covenant made with him, when he had done with this world, and was to expect no more in it, if he took it not to concern a future blessed-

blessedness in another world? Was it only for the hoped prosperity of his House and Family when he was gone? This (which is the only thing we can fasten on) he plainly secludes in the next words,—*although he make it not to grow.*

Therefore it was his reflexion upon those loving-kindnesses mentioned in the former part of the Psalm, contained in Gods Covenant, and confirmed by his Oath, but understood according to the sense and import already declared, that caused this sudden turn in *Dauids* spirit; and made him that lately spoke as out of a *Golgortha*, as if he had nothing but death in his eye and thoughts, to speak now in so different a strain, and (after some additional pleadings, in which his Faith further recovers it self) to conclude this Psalm with solemn praise; *Blessed be the Lord for evermore, Amen and Amen.*

We see then the contemplation of his own and all mens mortality, abstractly and alone considered, cloathed his Soul with black, wrapt it up in gloomy darkness, makes the whole Kind of human Creatures seem to him an obscure shadow, an empty vanity: But his recalling into his thoughts a succeeding state of immortal life, clears up the day, makes him and all things appear in another hue, gives a fair account why such a Creature as Man was made; and therein makes the whole frame of things in this inferiour world look with a comely and well-composed aspect, as the product of a wise and rational design. Whence therefore we have this ground of discourse

fairly before us in the words themselves: *That the short time of man on Earth, limited by a certain unavoidable Death, if we consider it abstractly by it self, without respect to a future state, carries that appearance and aspect with it, as if God had made all men in vain.*

That is said to be vain, according to the importance of the word here used, which is either *False*, a fiction, an appearance only, a shadow, or evanid thing; or which is *Useless*, unprofitable, and to no valuable purpose.

The life of man, in the case now supposed, may be truly stiled *vain*, either way. And we shall say somewhat to each; but to the former more briefly.

I. It were vain, *i.e.* little other than a shew, a meer shadow, a semblance of being. We must indeed, in the present case, even abstract him from himself, and consider him only as a mortal dying thing; and as to that of him which is so, what a contemptible nothing is he! There is an appearance of somewhat; but search a little, and enquire into it, and it vanishes into a meer nothing, is found a lye, a piece of falshood, as if he did but feign a being, and were not. And so we may suppose the *Psalmist* speaking, upon the view of his own and the common case of man, how fast all were hastning out of life, and laying down the being which they rather seemed to have assumed and borrowed, than to possess and own: Lord, why hast thou made Man such a fictitious thing, given him such a mock-being? Why hast thou brought

brought forth into the light of this world such a sort of Creatures; that rather *seem to be* than *are*; that have so little of solid and substantial being, and so little deserve to be taken for realities; that only serve to cheat one another into an opinion of their true existence, and presently vanish and confess their falshood? What hovering shadows, what uncertain entities are they? In a moment they are and are not. I know not when to say I have seen a man. It seems as if there were some such things before my eyes; I perswade my self that I see them move and walk to and fro, that I talk and converse with them: But instantly my own sense is ready to give my sense the lye. They are on the sudden dwindled away, and force me almost to acknowledg a Delusion. I am but mockt with a shew; and what seem'd a reality, proves an imposture. Their pretence to being, is but fiction and falshood, a cozenage of over-credulous unwary sense. They only personate what they are thought to be, and quickly put off their very selves as a disguise. This is agreeable to the language of Scripture elsewhere, *Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lye, &c.*

Psal. 62.9?

In two respects may the present state of man seem to approach near to nothingness, and so admit this Rhetorication of the *Psalmist*, as if he were in this sense a vain thing, a figment, or a lye, viz. in respect of the

{ *Minuteness*, and }
{ *Instability* } of this his (ma-
terial and perishable) being.

I. The

1. The *minuteness*, the small portion or degree of being which this mortal part of man hath in it. It is truly said of all created things, Their *non-esse* is more than their *esse*, they have more no-being than being. It is only some limited portion that they have, but there is an infinitude of being which they have not. And so coming infinitely nearer to nothingness than fulness of being, they may well enough wear the name of *Nothing*. Wherefore the first and Fountain-being justly appropriates to himself the name, *I am*; yea, tells us, *He is*, and *there is none besides Him*; therein leaving no other name than that of *Nothing* unto Creatures. And how much more may this be said of the material and mortal part, this outside of man, whatever of him is obnoxious to death and the grave? Which alone (abstractly lookt on) is the subject of the *Psalmist's* present consideration and discourse.

Plotin.
En. 2. 1. 6.

By how much any thing hath more of Matter, it hath the less of actual Essence. Matter being rather a capacity of being, than being it self, or a dark umbrage or shadow of it, actually nothing, but [*οὐδὲν, τίς*] (as are the expressions of a noble Philosopher) a meer Semblance, or a Lye.

Isa. 40.

And it is the language not of Philosophers only, but of the Holy Ghost concerning all the Nations of men, *that they are as nothing, less than nothing, and vanity*. What a scarcity then, and penury of being, must we suppose in each individual! especially if we look alone upon the outer part, or rather the umbrage or shadow of the man?

2. The

2. The *instability* and fluidness of it. The visible and corporeal being of man hath nothing steady or consistent in it. Consider his exterior frame and composition, he is no time all himself at once. There is a continual defluence and access of parts; so that some account, each Climacterick of his age changes his whole Fabrick. Whence it would follow, that besides his staticque individuating Principle (from which we are now to abstract) nothing of him remains; He is another thing; The former man is vanished and gone; while he is, he hastens away, and within a little is not. In respect of the duration, as well as the degree of his being, he is next to nothing. He opens his eye, and is not. Gone in the twinkling of an eye. There is nothing in him stable enough, to admit a fixed look. So it is with the whole scene of things in this material world. As was the true Maxim of an Ancient, All things flow, nothing stays; after the manner of a River. The same thing which the Apostle's words more elegantly express; *The fashion of this world passeth away.* The scheme, the shew, the pageantry of it. He speaks of it but as an appearance, as if he knew not whether to call it something or nothing, it was so near to vanishing into nothing. And therefore he there requires, that the affections which mutual nearness in relation challenges, be as if they were not: That we rejoyce in reference to one another, (even most nearly related, as the occasion and scope of his discourse teach us to under-

Job 27.19.

Heracl.

1 Cor. 7.

understand him) but as if we rejoiced not, and to weep as if we wept not. Which implies, the objects merit no more, and are themselves as if they were not. Whence therefore a continued course of intense passion were very incongruous towards so discontinuing things.

And the whole state of man being but a shew, the pomp and glittering of the greatest men, make the most splendid and conspicuous part of it: yet all this we find is not otherwise reckoned of, *than an image, a dream, a vision of the night; every man at his best state is altogether vanity, walketh in a vain shew, disquieteth himself in vain, &c.* Of all without exception 'tis pronounced, *man is like to vanity, his days are as a shadow that passeth away. As Ecclesiastes often, of all sublunary things, vanity of vanities, &c.*

2, But yet there is another notion of [*vain*], as it signifies *useless, unprofitable, or to no purpose.* And in this sense also, if we consider the universal mortality of mankind without respect to a future state, there was a specious ground for the expostulation, *Why hast thou made all men in vain?*

Vanity in the former notion speaks the emptiness of a thing, absolutely and in it self considered; In this latter relatively, as it is referred to, and measured by an end. That is, in this sense, vain, which serves to no end, or to no worthy and valuable end; which amounts to the same. For in as much as all ends, except the last, are means also to a further end; if the

end

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Job 20.
8, 9.
Psal. 73.
20.
Psal. 39.
6.

end immediately aimed at be vain and worthless, that which is referred to it, as it is so referred, cannot but be also vain.

Whereupon now let us make trial what end we could in this case think man made for.

Which will best be done by taking some view.

1. Of his nature.

2. Of the ends for which, upon that supposition, we must suppose him made.

1. Of the former (neglecting the strictness of Philosophical disquisition) no more is intended to be said than may comport with the design of a popular discourse. And it shall suffice therefore, only to take notice of what is more obvious in the nature of man, and subservient to the present purpose. And yet we are here to look further than the meer surface and outside of man, which we only considered before; and to view his nature, as it is in it self; and not as the supposition of *its having nothing but what is mortal belonging to it*, would make it: for as the exility (and almost nothingness) of man's being considered according to that supposition, did best serve to express the vanity of it, in the former notion that hath been given of a *vain thing*: So the excellency, and solid substantiality of it, considered as it is in it self, will conduce most to the discovery of its vanity in this latter notion thereof. That is, if we first consider *that*, and then the supposition of such a Creature's being only made to perish. And if what shall be said herein, do, in the sequel, tend to destroy that

I.

that above-mentioned disposition, (as it, being established, would destroy the prime glory of Human Nature.) it can only be said *magna est veritas*, &c. In the mean time we may take a view, in the nature of man.

1. Of his *intellective powers*: Hereby he frames notions of things, even of such things as are above the sphere of sense; of moral good and evil, right and wrong, what is virtuous and what is vicious; of abstract and universal natures. Yea, and of a first being, and cause, and of the wisdom, power, goodness, and other perfections which must primarily agree to him. Hereby he affirms and denies one thing of another, as he observes them to agree and disagree, and discerns the truth and falshood of what is spoken or deny'd. He doth hereby infer one thing from another, and argue himself into firm and unwavering assent to many things, not only above the discovery of sense, but directly contrary to their sensible appearances.

2. His power of *determining himself*, of choosing and refusing, according as things are estimated, and do appear to him. Where also it is evident how far the objects which this faculty is sometimes exercised about, do transcend the reach of all sensible nature; as well as the peculiar nobleness and excellency is remarkable of the faculty it self.

It hath often for its object, things of the highest nature, purely spiritual and divine, Virtue, Religion, God himself. So as that these (the faculty being repair'd only by sanctifying

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grace,

grace, not now first put into the nature of man) are chosen by some, and, where it is not so, refused ('tis true) by the most; but not by a meer not-willing of them, (as meer brutal appetite also doth not-will them, which no way reaches the notion of a refusal), but by rejecting them with a positive aversion and dislike, wherein there is great iniquity and sin; which could not be but in a nature capable of the opposite temper.

And it is apparent, this faculty hath the privilege of determining it self, so as to be exempt from the necessitating influence of any thing foreign to it. Upon the supposal whereof, the managery of all human affairs, all Treaties between man and man, to induce a consent to this or that; The whole frame of government, all Legislation and distribution of publick Justice do depend. For take away this supposition, and these will presently appear most absurd and unjust. With what solemnity are applications and addrestes made to the Will of man upon all occasions? How is it courted, and solicited, and sued unto? But how absurd were it so to treat the other Creatures, that act by a necessity of Nature in all they do? to make supplications to the Wind, or propound articles to a Brute? And how unjust, to determine and inflict severe penalties for unavoidable and necessitated actions and omissions?

These things occur to our first notice, upon any (a more sudden and cursory) view of the nature of man. And what should hinder, but we may infer from these, that there is further in his nature.

3. *A capacity of an immortal state, i. e. that his nature is such, that he may, if God so please, by the concurrent influence of his ordinary power and providence, without the help of a miracle, subsist in another state of life after this, even a state that shall not be liable to that impairment and decay that we find this subject to. More is not (as yet) contended for; and so much methinks none should make a difficulty to admit, from what is evidently found in him. For it may well be supposed, that the admitting of this (at least) will seem much more easie to any free and unprejudic'd reason, than to ascribe the operations before instant'd in, to alterable or perishable matter, or indeed to any matter at all. It being justly presumed, that none will ascribe to matter, as such, the powers of ratiocination or volition. For then every particle of matter must needs be rational and intelligent, (an high advance to what one would never have thought at all active). And how unconceivable is it, that the minute particles of matter, in themselves, each of them destitute of any such powers, should by their mutual intercourse with one another, become furnish'd with them! That they should be able to understand, deliberate, resolve, and chuse, being assembl'd and duly dispos'd in counsel together; but, apart, rest all in a deep and sluggish silence! Besides, if the particles of matter howsoever modifi'd and mov'd, to the utmost subtilty or tenuity, and to the highest vigor, shall then become intelligent and rational, How is it that we observe not, as any matter is more*
subtil

subtil and more swiftly and variously moved, it makes not a discernably nearer approach (proportionably) to the faculty and power of reasoning? And that nothing more of an aptitude or tendency towards intelligence and wisdom is to be perceived in an aspiring flame or a brisk wind, than in a clod or a stone? If to understand, to define, to distinguish, to syllogize, be nothing else but the agitation and collision of the minute parts of rarified matter among one another; methinks, some happy Chymist or other, when he hath mist his designed mark, should have hit upon some such more noble product, and by one or other prosperous sublimation have caused some temporary resemblance (at least) of these operations. Or, if the paths of Nature, in these affairs of the mind, be more abstruse, and quite out of the reach and road of artificial achievement, Whence is it, that Nature her self (that is vainly enough supposed by some to have been so happy, as by some casual strokes to have fabricated the first of human Creatures, that have since propagated themselves) is grown so effete and dull, as never since to hit upon any like effect in the like way: And that no Records of any time or age give us the notice of some such Creature sprung out of some *Epicurean* Womb of the Earth, and elaborated by the only immediate hand of Nature, so disposing the parts of matter in its constitution, that it should be able to perform the operation belonging to the mind of man.

But if we cannot, with any tolerable pretence

or shew of reason, attribute these operations to any meer matter, that there must be something else in man to which they may agree, that is distinct from his corruptible part, and that is therefore capable, by the advantage of its own nature, of subsisting hereafter, (while God shall continue to it an influence agreeable to its nature, as he doth to other Creatures).

And hence it seems a modest and sober deduction, That there is in the nature of man, at least, a capacity of an immortal state.

2. Now, if we yet suppose there is *actually* no such state for man hereafter, It is our next business to view the Ends for which, upon that supposition, he may be thought to have been made. Whence we shall soon see, there is not any of them whereof it may be said, This is that he was created for, as his *adequate* End.

And here we have a double Agent to be accommodated with a suitable End ;

} Man now made. And
 } God who made him.

1. 1. *Man himself.* For it must be considered, that in as much as man is a Creature capable of propounding to himself an end, and of acting knowingly and with design towards it, (and indeed incapable of acting otherwise as a man), It would therefore not be reasonable to speak of him, in this discourse, as if he were meerly passive, and to be acted only by another : But we must reckon him obliged, in subordination to his Maker, to intend and pursue (himself) the proper End for which he appointed and made him. And in reason we are to expect, that

that what God hath appointed to be his proper end, should be such as is in it self most highly desirable, futable to the utmost capacity of his nature, and attainable by his action; so carrying with it sufficient inducements, both of desire and hope, to a vigorous and rational prosecution of it. Thus we must, at least, conceive it to have been in the primitive institution of mans end, (unto which the expostulation hath reference, *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*).

And we can think of no ends which men either do or ought to propound to themselves, but by the direction of one of these principles, *Sense, Reason, or Religion.*

1. *Sense* is actually the great Dictator to the most of men, and *de facto*, determines them to the mark and scope which they pursue, and animates the whole pursuit. Not that *Sense* is by it self capable of designing an end, but it too generally inclines and byasses *Reason* herein. So that *Reason* hath no other hand in the business, than only as a Slave to *Sense*, to form the design and contrive the methods which may most conduce to it, for the gratification of sensual appetite and inclination at last.

And the appetitions of *Sense* (wherein it hath so much mastery and dominion) are but such as we find enumerated, 1 *John* 2. 16, *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life.* Or (if we understand the Apostle to use the names of *lust* objectively) the objects sufficiently connote the appetitions themselves. All which may fitly be refer'd to *Sense*: either the

outward senses, or the fancy or imagination, which as deservedly comes under the same common denomination.

Now, who can think the satisfying of these lusts the commensurate end of man? Who would not, upon the supposition of no higher, say with the Psalmist, *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* To what purpose was it for him to live in the world a few years, upon this account only, and so go down to the place of silence? What is there in the momentary satisfaction of this mortal flesh; in his pleasing-view of a Mass of Treasure, (which he never brought with him into the World, but only heaped together, and so leaves not the World richer or poorer than he found it)? What is there in the applause and admiration of fools (as the greater part always are), that we should think it worth the while for man to have liv'd for these things? If the question were put, *Wherefore did God make man?* Who would not be asham'd so to answer it, He made him to eat, and drink, and take his pleasure, to gather up wealth for he knows not who; to use his inventions, that each one may become a talk and wonder to the rest; and then when he hath fetch'd a few turns upon the Theater, and entertained the eyes of beholders with a short scene of impertinencies, descend and never be heard of more? What, that he should come into the World furnish'd with such powers and endowments for this? It were a like case, as if one should be clad in scarlet to go to plough, or curiously instructed in arts and sciences to tend Hogs.

Or,

Or, 2dly, If we rise higher, to the view of such ends as more refined *Reason* may propose, within the compass only of this present state : We will suppose that it be either,

The acquisition of much knowledg, the furnishing his understanding with store of choice and well-digested notions ; that he may please himself in being (or in having men think him) a learned Wight. Death robs away all his gain. And what is the world the better ? How little shall he enrich the clods, among which he must shortly lie down and have his abode ? Or how little is the gain, when the labour and travel of so many years is all vanished and blown away with the last puff of his dying-breath, and the fruit that remains, is to have it said by those that survive, *There lies learned dust* ? That any part of his acquisitions, in that kind, descends to others, little betters the case, when they that succeed are all hastening down also into the same ignoble dust. Besides, that the increase of sorrow, both because the objects of knowledg do but encrease the more he knows do multiply the more upon him, so as to beget a despair of ever knowing so much as he shall know himself to be ignorant of ; and a thousand doubts, about things he hath more deeply considered ; which his more confident (undiscovered) ignorance never dreamt of or suspected. And thence an inquietness an irresolution of mind, which they that never drove at any such mark are (more contentedly) unacquainted with. And also, because that by how much knowledg hath refin'd a mans Soul,

so much it is more sensible and perceptive of troublesom impressions from the disorderly state of things in the World; which they that converse only with earth and dirt, have not spirits clarified and fine enough to receive. So that, except a mans knowing more than others were to be refer'd to another state, the labour of attaining thereto, and other accessory disadvantages, would hardly ever be compensated by the fruit or pleasure of it. And unless a man would suppose himself made for torment, he would be shrewdly tempted to think a quiet and drowsie ignorance an happier state.

Or if that a mans Reason, with a peculiarity of temper, guide him to an active negotiating life, rather than that of contemplation; and determine him to the endeavour of serving mankind, or the community to which he belongs: By how much the worthier actions he performs, and by how much more he hath perfected and accomplish'd himself with parts and promptitude for such actions; The loss and vanity is but the greater thereby, since he and those he affected to serve, are all going down to the silent grave. Of how little use are the Politician, the States-man, the Senator, the Judge, or the Eloquent man, if we lay aside the consideration of their subserviency to the keeping the world in a more composed and orderly state, for the prosecution of the great designs of eterniry, when ere long all their thoughts shall perish? what matter were it what became of the world; whether it be wise or foolish, rich or poor, quiet or unquiet, govern'd or ungovern'd? Whoever should

should make their order and tranquillity their study, or that should intend their thoughts and endeavours to the finding out the exactest methods and rules of government and policy, should but do as they that should use a great deal of pains and art in the curious adorning and trimming up of a dying person ; or as if some one, among many condemned persons, should be very solicitous to have them march with him in very exact order to the place of execution. If the World be not looked upon as a tiring room to dress one's self in, for an appearance on the eternal stage ; but only as a great Charnel-house, where they undress and put off themselves, to sleep in everlasting darkness ; How can we think it worth a thought, or to be the subject of any rational design or care ? Who would not rather bless himself in a (more rational) neglect and regardlessness of all human affairs ; and account an unconcerned indifference the highest wisdom ?

Yea, 3dly, If we suppose *Religion* (which we need not (because it is mentioned in this order) conceive exclusive of Reason, but rather perfective of it : Reason having first found out God , Religion adores him) to become with any the Ruling-principle , and to have the direction and government of the Man, as to his way and end : How would even that languish with the best, were the consideration of a future state laid aside, which with so few, notwithstanding it, hath any efficacy at all to command and govern their lives ?

Religion terminates upon God ; and upon

him under a double notion, either as we design service and honour to him, or as from him we design satisfaction and blessedness to our selves.

Now if a mans thoughts and the intention of his mind be carried towards God under the former notion, How great an allay and abatement must it needs be to the vigor and zeal of his affection, who shall with the most sincere devotedness apply himself to serve His interest and glory, to reflect upon the universal mortality of himself and mankind, without any hope of compensation to it by a future immortality?

It is agreed on all hands, that the utmost contributions of Creatures can add nothing to Him: And that our glorifying Him doth only consist, either in our acknowledging Him glorious our selves, or representing Him so to others.

But how little doth it signifie, and how flat and low a thing would it seem, that I should only turn mine eye upwards and think a few admiring thoughts of God this hour, while I apprehend my self liable to lose my very thinking power and whole being the next? Or if we could spread His just renown, and gain all the sons of men to a concurrence with us in the adoring of His sovereign Excellencies, How would it damp and stifle such loyal and dutiful affection, to consider, that the universal testimony, so deservedly given Him, shall shortly cease for ever, and that infinitely blessed Being be e're-long (again, as he was from eternity before) the only witness of his own glory?

And

And if the propension of a mans Soul be towards God under the latter notion also, in order to a *satisfaction* that shall thence accrew to himself (which design, both in the pursuit and execution of it, is so conjunct with the former that it cannot be sever'd). It cannot but be an unspeakable diminution and check to the highest delights in this kind, to think how soon they shall have an end ; that the darkness and dust of the grave shall shortly obscure and extinguish the glory of this lightsom scene.

To think every time one enters that blessed presence, for ought I know I shall approach it no more ! This is possibly my last sight of that pleasant face, my last taste of those enravishing pleasures ! What bitterness must this infuse into the most delicious sweetness our state could then admit ! And by how much more free and large Grace should be in its present communications, and by how much any Soul should be more experienc'd in the life of God and inured to divine delights, so much the more grievous and afflictive resentments it could not but have of the approaching end of all ; and be the more powerfully tempted to say , Lord, why was I made in vain ? How faint and languid would endeavours be after the knowledg of that God whom I may but only know and die ? How impotent and ineffectual would the attractions of this end be to man in this terrene state to raise him above the World, and rescue him from the power of sensible things, to engage him in the pursuit of that sanctity and purity which alone can qualifie him for converse with God,

to

to bear him out in a conflict against the (more natural) inclinations of sense, When if with much labour and painful striving, much self-denial and severity to the flesh, any disposition should be attained to relish divine pleasures, it be considered all the while, that the end of all may be as soon lost as it is gained; and that possibly there may be no more than a moments pleasure to recompence the pains and conflicts of many years? Although, in this case, the continual hope and expectation of some farther manifestation and fruition might much influence a person already holy, and a great lover of God, unto a stedfast adherence to him; yet how little would it do to make men such, that are yet unsutable and disaffected to him? or even to recover such out of their lapses and drowsie fits, that are not altogether so?

And it is further to be considered, that since God hath given man a being capable of subsisting in another state, (as doth appear by what hath been already said) ; and since he is therefore capable of enjoying a greater happiness than his present state can admit of; that capacity will draw upon him a most indispensable obligation to intend that happiness as his end. For admit that there be no future state for him, it is however impossible any man should know there is none; and upon an impartial view of the whole case, he hath enough to render it (at least) far more likely to him that there is. And certainly he cannot but be obliged to pursue the highest good (even by the Law of Nature it self) which his nature is capable of; which
probably

probably he may attain, and which he is now where forbidden by his Creator to aspire unto. Whence therefore, if we now circumscribe him within the limits of this present mortal state; or if, for argument's sake, we suppose eventually there is no other; we must not only confess that capacity to be given him in vain, but that he is obliged also to employ the principal endeavours of his life and all his powers in vain, (for certainly his principal endeavour ought to be laid out in order to his principal end); that is, to pursue that good which he may attain, but never shall; and which is possible to him, but not upon any terms future.

And if it be admitted, that the subject state of man must silence all objections against any such inconsistencies, and make him content to act in pure obedience to his Maker (whether he signify his will by the Law of Nature only, or by any positive Precept), though he shall not hereafter enjoy any permanent state of blessedness as the consequent reward: That virtue and goodness, an holy rectitude of inclinations and actions, are reward enough to themselves: That there is that justice and sweetness in Religion, to oblige him to love and reverence and adore the Divine Majesty this moment, though he were sure to perish for ever and be reduced to nothing the next. I say, admitting all this; yet,

2. Since the *blessed God himself* is to be considered as the principal Agent and Designer in this enquiry [*Why hast thou made all men in vain?*]. It is with modest and humble reverence

rence to be considered, What end worthy of that infinitely perfect Being, he may be supposed to have propounded to himself in forming such a Creature of so improvable a nature, and furnished with so noble faculties and powers, for so transient and temporary a state: And how well it will consist with the most obvious and unquestionable notions we can have of an absolutely perfect Being and the Attributes which he most peculiarly challenges and appropriates to himself, (so as not only to own, but to glory in them), that he should give being not to some few only, but to the whole species of human Creatures, and therein communicate to them a nature capable of knowing, of loving and enjoying himself in a blessed eternity, with a design to continue them only for some short space on earth, in a low imperfect state, where in they shall be liable to sink still lower, to the vilest debasement of their natures; and yet not for their transgression herein, (for 'tis the mortality of man, not by sin, but by Creation or the design of the Creator only, that is now supposed); but for his meer pleasure to bereave them of being, and reduce them all again to nothing?

It is to be considered, Whether thus to resolve and do can any way agree to God, according to our clearest and most assured conceptions of him; not from our reasoning only, but his discovery of himself. For otherwise we see the imputation falls where we should dread to let it rest, of having *made man in vain.*

He

He is, in common account, said to act vainly, who acts beneath himself, so as to pursue an end altogether unworthy of him, or none at all.

'Tis true, that some single acts may be done by great persons as a divertisement, without dishonourable reflection, that may seem much beneath them. And if any do stoop to very mean offices and employments to do good, to help the distressed and relieve the miserable, it is a glorious acquiescence; and the greater they are, the higher is the glory of their condescending goodness. Benignity of nature and a propension to the most unexpected acts of a merciful self-depression, when the case may require it, are the most comely Ornaments of Princely Greatness, and out-shine the glory of the richest Diadem. But a wonted habitual course of mean actions in great persons, that speak a low design or no design at all, but either an humour to trifle, or a mischievous nature and disposition, would never fail to be thought inglorious and infamous; as may be seen in the instances of *Sardanapalus's* spinning, and *Domitian's* killing of Flies.

When wisdom and goodness are in conjunction with power and greatness, they never persuade a descent but upon such terms and for such purposes that a more glorious advancement shall ensue. Wisdom foreseeing that end, and Goodness readily taking the way, which (though it were most undesigned, or not aimed at as an end) could not fail to effect it.

Not are any Attributes of the Divine Being
more

more conspicuous than these; more testified by Himself, or more generally acknowledged by all men that have not deny'd his existence. Or if any have done that violence to their own minds, as to erase and blot out thence the belief of an existing Deity, yet at least, while they deny it, they cannot but have this notion of what they deny, and grant that these are great perfections, and must agree to God, upon supposition that He do exist. If therefore He should do any thing repugnant to these, or we should suppose Him to do so, we should therein suppose Him to act below a God, and so as were very unworthy of Him.

And though it becomes us to be very diffident of our own reasonings concerning the Counsels and Designs of that eternal Being; so as if we should find him to assert any thing expressly of himself, which we know not how to reconcile with our own preconceived thoughts, therein to yield him the cause, and confess the debility of our understandings: Yet certainly, it were great rashness and void of all pretence, to suppose any thing which neither he saith of himself, nor we know how, consistently, to think.

Nor are we, in judging of his designs, to bring him down to our model, or measure him by man, whose designs do for the most part bespeak only his own indigency, and are levelled at his own advantage and the bettering some way or other of his present condition. Whatsoever the great God doth towards his Creatures, we must understand him to do, though

though with design, yet from an exuberant fullness of life and being, by which he is incapable of an accession to himself. And hence that he can, in reference to himself, have no other inducement to such action, besides the complacency which he takes in diffusing his free communications, (*for he exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, because he delighteth in these things*), and the maintaining the just honour and reputation of his government over his Creatures, who as they are *of him*, and *through him*, must be all *to him*, that he may have glory for ever. Jer. 9. 24.

Now though it be most undoubtedly true, that the Sovereignty of his power and dominion over his Creatures (of which he hath no need, and to whom he so freely gave being) is so absolute and unlimited, that if we consider that only, we must acknowledg, he might create a Man or an Angel and annihilate him presently; yea, that he might, if he so pleased, raise up many thousand Worlds of intelligent and innocent Creatures into being in one moment, and throw them into nothing again the very next moment. Rom. II. 36,

Yet how unwarrantably should we main-
 the notion of God, if we should conceive of
 him only according to one Attribute, secluding
 the consideration of the rest? How misshapen
 an Idea should we bear of him in our minds?
 And how would it deform the face of Provi-
 dence, and spoil the decorum of his Admini-
 strations, if they should be the effects of one
 single Attribute only, the other having no in-
 fluence

fluence on the affairs of the world? If nothing but *Mercy* should appear in his dispensations toward sinful man, so that every man might do what were good in his own eyes, without cause of fear to be called to account; If the most dissolute and prophane were equally assured of his favour, with those who are most holy and strictly regular in all their conversation, What would be thought of God and Religion? Or how should we savour the notion of an impure Deity, taking pleasure to indulge the wickedness of men? And if *Justice* alone have the whole management of Affairs, and every act of sin be followed with an act of sudden vengeance, and the whole World become a flaming Theater, and all men held in an hopeless expectation of fiery indignation and of judgment without mercy, What would become of that amiable representation, and the consolatory thoughts we have of God, and of that love and duty which some Souls do bear towards him? Or if *Power* should affect daily to shew it self in unusual appearances and effects, in changing every hour the shapes of the terrestrial Creatures, in perpetual quick innovations of the courses of the celestial, with a thousand more kinds of prodigious events that might be the hourly effects of unlimited power, How were the order of the World disturbed, and how unlovely an Idea would it beget in every intelligent Creature, of him that made and rules it? Yet is it from no defect of *Mercy*, that all men are not equally favoured and blessed of God; nor of *Justice*, that a speedy ven-

vengeance is not taken of all; nor of Power, that the World is not filled with astonishing wonders every day; but rather from their un-excessiveness, and that they make that blessed temperature where they reside, and are exercised in so exact proportion, that nothing is ever done unworthy of Him, who is, at once, both perfectly Merciful, and Just, and Powerful, and Wise, and hath all perfections eminently comprehended and united in His own most simple Being.

It were therefore besides the purpose to insist only what Sovereign Power, considered apart, might do; but we are to consider what may be congruous to Him to do, who is infinitely Wise and Good, as well as Powerful.

1. And first, let it be weighed, how it may square with the Divine Wisdom, to give being to a World of reasonable Creatures, and giving them only a short time of abode in being, to abandon them to a perpetual annihilation.

Wisdom in any Agent must needs suppose the intention of some valuable end of his action. And the Divine Wisdom, wherein it hath any end diverse from that which his pure goodness and benignity towards his Creatures would incline him to, (which also we must conceive it most intent to promote and further), cannot but have it chiefly in design; it being determined that his goodness should open it self and break forth into a Creation, and that of reasonable Creatures, so to manage his government over these, (which indeed are the only

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subjects of government in the strict and proper notion of it), as may most preserve his authority, and keep up his just interest in them, both by recommending him to their fear and love; to possess them with that due and necessary reverence of him that may restrain them from contemptuous sinning; and so endear his government to them, as to engage them to a placid and free obedience.

But how little would it agree with this design of the Divine Wisdom, to have made man only for this temporary state? For,

1. How little would it tend to the begetting and setting that fear of God in the hearts of men, that were necessary to preserve his authority and government from a prophane contempt; whereas daily experience shews, that there's now no difference made between them that fear God and them that fear him not, unless wherein the former are worse dealt with and more exposed to sufferings and wrongs: That, at least, 'tis often (yea for the most part) so, that to depart from iniquity is to make one's self a prey; that those who profess and evidence the most entire devotedness to God, and pay the greatest observance and duty to him, become a common scorn upon this very account, and are in continual danger to be eaten up as bread by those that call not upon God; while in the mean time the tabernacles of Robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure, are not plagued as other men, nor in trouble as other men. And judgment is not here executed for wicked works in this World. If also nothing

nothing is to be expected (either of good or evil) in another, who is likely to be induced (in this case) to fear God or to be subject to him? And how unlike is this to the Wisdom of the supreme Ruler, to expose his most rightful and sovereign Authority to the fearless and insolent affronts of his own revolted Creatures, without any design of future reparation to it; as if he had created them on purpose, only to curse him and die? But he hath prevented the occasion of so reproachful a censure, and thought fit to fill his Word and the Consciences of guilty sinners with threats and dreadful presages of a future judgment and state of punishment. To which he is no less concern'd, both in point of wisdom and veracity, (and I may add of legal justice), to make the event correspond, that he may neither be found to have omitted any due course for preventing or redress of so great an evil; and that, if the threatening do not effectually over-awe sinners, the execution may at least right himself: And that, in the mean time, he do not (that which would least of all become him, and which were most repugnant to his nature) make use of a solemn fiction to keep the world in order, and maintain his government by falsehood and deceit, that is, by threatening what he knows shall never be.

2. Nor were there (in the case all along supposed) a more probable provision made, to conciliate and procure to the Divine Majesty the love which it is requisite he should have from the children of men.

And this cannot but be thought another apt method for his Wisdom to pitch upon, to render his government acceptable, and to engage men to that free and complacential subjection which is futable to a God. For how can that filial and dutiful affection ever be the genuine product or impress of such a representation of the case between God and them; that is, that they shall be most indispensably obliged to devote their whole being and all their powers entirely to his service and interest; exactly to observe his strictest Laws, to keep under the severest restraint their most innate reluctant inclinations; and in the mean time expect the administrations of Providence to be such, towards them, that they shall find harder usage all their days than his most insolent and irreconcilable enemies, and at last lose their very beings, they know not how soon, and therewith (necessarily) all possibilities of any future recompence. Is this a likely way to procure love, and to captivate hearts into an affectionate and free obedience? Or what is it probable to produce, but a sowre and sullen despondency, the extinction of all generous affection, and a temper more agreeable to a forc'd enthralment to some malignant insulting genius, than a willing subjection to the God of all grace and love?

And every one will be ready to say, There is little of wisdom in that Government, the administration whereof is neither apt to beget fear nor love in those that are subject to it; but either through the want of the one to be despised, or to be regretted through the want of the other.

And

And this being the very case, upon supposition of no future state, It seems altogether unworthy of the Divine Wisdom, that such a Creature should ever have been made as Man, upon which no end is attainable (as the course of Providence commonly runs in this world), in comparison whereof, it were not better and more honourable to his Maker, (whose interest it is the part of his Wisdom to consult), that he had never been. And therefore, as to God and the just and worthy designs of his glory, he would seem, upon this supposition, wholly made in vain.

2. And secondly, How congruous and agreeable would this supposition prove to the Goodness of God? As that other Attribute of Wisdom doth more especially respect His own interest, so doth this the interest of his Creatures: That is, if it be understood, not in a Metaphysical, but in a Moral sense; as it imports a propensity and steady bent of will unto benefaction, according to that of the Psalmist, *Thou art good, and dost good.* Psalm. 119.
68.

And this free and generous Principle it is, which gives the first rise and beginning to all the designs any way respecting the well-being and happiness of Creatures; which, then, infinite Wisdom forms and manages to their full issues and accomplishment, guiding (as it were) the hand of Almighty Power in the execution of them.

That there should be a Creation, we may conceive to be the first dictate of this immense Goodness, which afterwards diffuses it self

through the whole, in communications agreeable to the nature of every Creature. So that even this inferiour and less noble part, the Earth *is full of the goodness of the Lord.*

Psal. 33. 5.

It creates first its own object, and then pours forth it self upon it with infinite delight, rewarding the expence with the pleasure of doing good.

Now if we should suppose such a Creature as Man made only for that short time and low state which we see to be allotted him in this World, it were neither difficult nor enough, to reconcile the *hypothesis* with strict justice, which upon the ground of absolute dominion, may do what it will with its own: But the ill accord it seems to have with so large and abounding Goodness, renders it very unlike the dispensation of the blessed God; no enjoyment being in that case afforded to this sort of Creatures, agreeable to their common nature and capacity, either in *degree* or *continuance*.

Not in *degree*: For who sees not, that the nature of man is capable of greater things than he here enjoys? And where that capacity is rescued from the corruption that narrows and debases it, how sensibly do holy Souls resent and bewail their present state, as a state of imperfection? With how fervent and vehement desires and groans do they aspire and pant after an higher and more perfect? *We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, (that is not enough, to be delivered out of the miseries of life, by laying down this passive part, is not that which will*

2 Cor. 5. 4.

will terminate their desires); *but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.*

Theirs are not brutal groans, the complaint of oppress'd sensitive nature under a present evil; but rational and spiritual, the expressions of desire strongly carry'd to pursue an apprehended future good.

The truest notion we can yet have of the primitive nature and capacity of man, is by beholding it in its gradual restitution. And is it agreeable to the goodness of God, to put such a nature into any, and withhold the future object? As if it were a pleasure to him, to behold the work of his own hands spending it self in weary strugglings towards him, and vext all the while it continues in being, with the desire of what it shall never enjoy; and which he hath made it desire, and therein encouraged it to expect?

Nor in *continuance*: For I suppose it already evident, that the nature of man is capable (in respect of his principal part) of perpetuity, and so of enjoying a felicity hereafter that shall be permanent and know no end. And it seems no way congruous to so large Goodness, to stifle a capacity whereof it was it self the Author, and destroy its own work.

For if the Being of man is intended for so short a continuance, either he may have the knowledge of this determination concerning him, or not. If he cannot have the knowledge of it, why should any one say what they cannot know; or put such a thing upon God, that is so vilely reflecting and dishonourable to him?

1 Cor. 13
19.

If he may have the knowledg of it, then doth he seem a Creature made for torment, while by an easie reflection upon himself he may discern, he is not incapable of a perpetual state, and is yet brought forth into the light to be ere long extinguisht and shut up in everlasting darkness. And who can think this a thing worthy of infinite and eternal Goodness? Besides (as hath been insisted before), that this torture, proceeding from so sad an expectation, cannot but be most grievous and afflictive to the best. Whence the Apostle tells us, that Christians, *if in this life only they had hope, were of all men most miserable*. So that it were more desirable never to have been. If any yet fall hereafter into a state to which they would prefer perpetual annihilation, in as much as it is wholly by their own default, it no way reflects upon Divine Goodness. But it would be a dishonourable reflection rather upon that Author and Fountain of all Goodness, if he should not express himself wise and just as well as good; as it would upon a man, especially a Ruler over others, if that which we call good-nature were conjunct with stolidity or an insensibleness of whatsoever affronts to his Person and Government.

Upon the whole, therefore, it seems most repugnant to these great Attributes of the Divine Being, to have made man only for this present state. That to think so, were to conceive unworthily of him, as if he had acted much beneath himself, and done a vain thing in making such a Creature, no end being attainable
by

by it, which we can suppose either his Wisdom or Goodness to aim at.

If any would imagine to themselves an expedient, by supposing an eternal succession of human generations, upon whom the Wisdom and Goodness of God might have a perpetual exercise in the government and sustentation of them for their appointed times: This would be far from satisfying as to either, but would rather encrease the difficulty; For there would be the same temptation upon all the individuals, to condemn or regret the Government of their Maker.

So that he should hereby even eternize his own reproach; and should always, in every succession, have still the same craving appetites returning, and expectations never to be satisfied, which were as repugnant to all he hath discovered to us of his nature, as any thing we can suppose.

Though some persons of a light and desultory humour, might imagine to themselves a pleasure in it, if they had the power to make such a rotation of things, rising and falling, coming and passing away, at their beck and command; and such as were of a sanguinary temper, might sport themselves in raising up and lopping off lives at pleasure with an arbitrary hand: Yet sure they would never gain by it the esteem of being either wise or good; and would, 'tis like, in time grow weary of the sport. But to form to our selves such Ideas of the blessed God, were an injury not inferior to the very denial of his being.

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His providence towards the inferior Creatures hath no resemblance of any such thing; whom his bounty sustains agreeably to their natures, who have no fore-sight of their own cessation from being, to keep them in a continual death by the expectation of it; and who serve to valuable and reasonable purposes while they are continued; for they are useful, partly to the sustentation of man, and partly to his instruction, in order to his higher ends.

And though each individual of them do not actually so, it is sufficient that the several kinds of them are naturally apt thereto, which are propagated according to a settled course and Law of Nature, in their individuals. And if all immediately serve not man, yet they do it immediately, in serving those that more immediately do. Besides, that when such a work was to be done, as the furnishing out and accomplishing this lower world; It was meet all things should be in number, weight, and measure, and correspond in every part. As if one build a House for entertainment, though the more noble Rooms only do come in view, yet all the rest are made answerably decent, on supposition that they may. It was becoming the august and great Lord of this world, that it have in it, not only what may sustain the indigent, but gratifie the contemplative by fresh variety; who would be apt to grow remiss by conyering only with what were of every days observation. Nor was that a low end, when such contemplation hath so direct a tendency to raise a considering mind to the sight, and love, and

and praise of the supreme Being, that hath stamp'd so lively signatures and prints of his own perfection upon all his works.

If it be said, Man might be in the same kind serviceable to the contemplation of Angels, though he were himself never to know any other than this mortal state. 'Tis true that he might so; but yet the incongruities were no way salv'd, of God's putting a capacity and expectation into his nature of a better state. Of his dealing so hardly with them, that he hath procur'd to love him. Of his never vindicating their high contempt that spent their days in rebellion against him.

Besides, that these were ill precedents, and no pleasant Theams for the view of an Angelical mind. And if they see a nature extinct, capable of their state, what might they suspect of their own?

So that, which way soever we turn our thoughts, we still see that man's mortality and liableness to an unavoidable death, abstracted from the thoughts of another state, carry that constant aspect, as if *all men were made in vain.*

What remains then, but that we conclude hence, we ought not too much, or too long, thus to abstract, nor too closely confine our eye to this dark and gloomy Theam, Death and the Grave, or with-hold it from looking further. For far be it from us to think the wise and holy God hath given being to man (and consequently exercis'd a long continued series of Providence thorough so many successive Ages towards him) *in vain.*

Nothing but a prospect of another state can solve the knot and work through the present difficulty, can give us a true account of man and what he was made for.

Therefore since it would be prophane and impious, sad and uncomfortable, a blasphemy to our Maker, and a torture to our selves, to speak it as our settled apprehension and judgment, That God hath made man to no purpose, We are obliged and concerned, both in justice to Him and compassion to our selves, so to represent the case, as that we may be able to remove so unworthy and black a thought to the greatest distance from us, both in it self and whatsoever practice would be consequent thereto: That is, to conclude, That certainly there must be another state after this, and accordingly steer our course.

The Improvement then of the foregoing Discourse will have a double aspect:

On our } Judgments,
Practice.

I.

1. On our Judgments. To settle this great Principle of Truth in them: *The certain futurity of another state after this life is over*, Unto which this present state is only preparatory and introductive.

For whereas we can never give a rational account why such a Creature as man was made, if we confine all our apprehensions concerning him to his present state on earth: Let them once transcend those narrow limits, fly over into eternity and behold him made for an everlasting

lasting state hereafter, and the difficulty now vanishes, the whole affair looks with a comely and befitting aspect.

For we may now represent the case thus to our selves: That man was put into this terrestrial state and dwelling, by the wise and righteous designation of his great Creator and Lord, that his loyalty to him, amidst the temptations and enticements of sensible things, might be tried a-while: That revolting from him, he is only left to feel here the just smart of his causeless defection: That yet such farther methods are used for his recovery, as are most suitable to his so impaired state. An allayed light shines to him in the midst of darkness, that his feeblér eye may receive a gradual illumination, and behold God in those more obscure discoveries which he now vouchsafes of himself, till by degrees he be won to take up good thoughts of him, and return into an acquaintance and friendship with him; which once begun here, shall be hereafter perfected in eternal fruitions. The offence and wrong done to his Maker, he in a strange unthought-of way makes compensation of to himself; and testifies his reconcilableness, and perswades a reconciliation upon such terms, and by so endearing mediums, as might melt and mollifie hearts of Adamant; and shall effectually prevail with many to yield themselves the subjects and instances of his admired goodness for ever; while others lie only under the natural consequents and just resentments of their unremedied enmity and folly. So are the glorious issues of God's dispensation

fation towards man, and the wise and merciful conduct of his equal Government, worthily celebrated through the days of eternity with just declamations and praises. We can fasten upon nothing exceptionable or unaccountable, yea, or that is not highly laudable and praise-worthy in this course of procedure.

Therefore, though now we behold a dark Cloud of Mortality hanging over the whole Human Race; Though we see the grave still devouring and still unsatisfied, and that all are successively drawn down into it; and we puzzle our selves to assign a reason why such a Creature was made a reasonable being, capable of an everlasting duration, to visit the world only and vanish, to converse a short space with objects and affairs so far beneath it, and retire we know not whither. If yet our eye follow him through the darker paths of the Region of death, till at the next appearance we behold him cloathed with immortality and fitted to an endless state, the wonder is over, and our amusement quickly ceases.

Wherefore let us thus bethink our selves, and consider: Surely he that made this great Universe, and dispos'd all the sorts, stations, and motions of Creatures in it in so exquisite order and method, cannot but be a most perfectly wise and intellectual Agent, and therefore cannot be supposed to have done any thing to no purpose; much less when all the inferior Creatures have ends visibly answering the exigency of their natures, to have made so excellent a Creature as Man (the nobler part of his

his lower Creation) in vain; that he only should be without his proportionable end, and after a short continuance in being, return to nothing, without leaving it conjecturable what he was made for. This were so intolerable an incongruity, and so unlike the footsteps that every-where else appear in the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, that we cannot but enquire further into this matter, and conclude at last, That he was made for some higher purposes than are within the reach of our sight, and hath his principal part yet to act upon another stage, within the veil, that shall never be taken down.

The future immortality of man seems therefore so certainly grounded upon what is discovered and generally acknowledged touching the nature of God and his most peculiar and essential Perfections, that unless we were further put to prove the existence of a God, (which to them that are rational need not, and to them that are not were in vain), there can no reasonable doubt remain concerning it.

2. Wherefore the further use we have to make of the matter proposed, is in reference to our *Practice*: Which it may fitly serve both to correct and reprove, and also to direct and guide.

1. It administers the ground of *just rebuke*: That since, if we terminate our thoughts and designs upon things only on this side the grave, it would seem we were wholly made in vain; we do yet so generally employ our cares and endeavours about such things, and even the vilest

vilest and most despicable of these ; and so live not to our own dishonour only, but to the reproach of our Maker, as if he made us for no more worthy ends. And let us but impartially debate the matter with our selves ; Can we, in sober reason, think we were made only for such ends as the most only pursue ? Have we any pretence to think so ? Or can it enter into our Souls to believe it ? Would not men be ashamed to profess such a belief ; or to have it written in their foreheads, These are the only ends they are capable of ? Then might one read, Such a man born to put others in mind of his Predecessor's Name, and only lest such a Family should want an Heir : Such a one to consume such an Estate, and devour the Provenue of so many Farms and Mannors : Such a one to fill so many Bags and Coffers to sustain the riot of him that succeeds : Some created to see and make sport ; to run after Hawks and Dogs, or spend the time which their weariness redeems from converse with Brutes, in making themselves such, by drinking away the little residue of Wit and Reason they have left ; mixing with this gentle exercise, their impure and scurrilous Drolleries, that they may befriend one another with the kind occasion of proving themselves to be yet of Human Race, by this only demonstration remaining to them, that they can laugh ; which medium, if the wisdom of the just were known, would be found so pregnant as to afford them a double conclusion, and be as effectual, oftentimes, to prove them Fools as Men : Others one might read born to trouble

ble the world, to disquiet the neighbourhood, and be the common plague of all about them; at least, if they have any within their reach and power that are wiser and more sober than themselves, or that value not their Souls at so cheap a rate as they: Others made to blaspheme their Maker, to rent the sacred Name of God, and make proof of their high valour and the gallantry of their brave spirits, by bidding a defiance to Heaven, and proclaiming their heroick contempt of the Deity and of all Religion. As if they had perswaded themselves into an opinion, That because they have had so prosperous success in the high achievements of conquering their Humanity, and baffling their own Fear, and Reason, and Conscience, Death also will yield them as easie a victory, or be afraid to encounter men of so redoubted courage; that the God of Heaven, rather than offend them, will not stick to repeal his Laws for their sakes, or never exact the observance of them from persons of their quality; That they shall never be called to judgment, or be complemented only there with great respect, as persons that bore much sway in their Country, and could number so many Hundreds or Thousands a year; That, at least, the infernal flames will never presume to touch so worthy Personages; That Devils will be awed by their Greatness, and fear to seize them, lest they should take it for an affront. No conceit can be imputed to these men absurd enough to over-match the absurdity of their practice. They can themselves think nothing more gross

and shameful than what they daily are not ashamed to act. For what absurdity can be compassed in a thought greater than what appears in a course of life managed in perpetual hostility to all principles of Reason and Humanity? And either they must own all the impious folly of such thoughts, or confess, upon other accounts, an equal insatiation in their thinking faculty it self. For either they think their course justifiable, or they do not. If they do, How fatally are all things inverted in their depraved minds? Wisdom and folly, Virtue and Vice, good and evil, seem to them transform'd into one another, and are no longer to be known by their own Names. The common notions of all mankind are but blind fancies in comparison of their later and clearer illumination: And the ancient religious sentiments of all former ages, dreams and follies to their admired new light. Their wise and rare discoveries, That they and all things came by chance, That this world hath no Owner or Lord, (because they never had wit or patience to consider the non-sense of them; and though they never, any of them, had the luck to see one clod of earth, or grain of sand, start up into being, out of nothing; much less ground to think, that such a world should of it self do so), are reason enough with them, to mock at the eternal Being, and attempt to jeer Religion out of the World, and all other men out of their reason and wits, as they have themselves. And sure this must be their only pretence, and their Atheism the best reason, upon which

which to justify their constant practice. For who can think (while he sees them not yet in chains) they should be so perfectly mad, as to acknowledg only such a Deity (the Author and Ruler of all things) whose favour were worth nothing, or to be procured by affronts ; to whom contempt were a sacrifice, and the violation of whatsoever is sacred , the most effectual propitiation ? Or acknowledg him for a God , whom they hope to over power, and to prosper in a War against him ?

And if they acknowledg none at all, and this be the fundamental Article of their Creed, That there is indeed none : Then can no man charge them with any thought more grossly foolish than their own ; nor can they devise to say any thing, by which more certainly to argue themselves bereft of the common understanding of men ; For who that is not so, if he only take notice of his own being, may not as certainly conclude the existence of a God, as that two and two make four ? Or what imagination can be too absurd to have place in that mind, that can imagine this Creation to be a casualty ? He would be thought besides himself that should say the same of the composition of a Clock or a Watch, though it were a thousand times more supposable. But if they do not justify themselves, to what purpose is it further to press them with absurdities, that persist in constant self-contradiction : or that have not so much left them of rational sensation, as to feel in their own minds the pressure of the very greatest absurdity ?

If they only presume they do well, because they have never ask'd themselves the question, or spent any thoughts about it; this speaks as much a besotted mind as any of the rest, and is as unworthy of a reasonable Creature. Why have they the power of thinking? Or vvhoe do in any case more generally incur the censure of imprudence and folly, than they who have only this plea for their actions, That they did not consider? Especially when the case is so plain, and the most sudden reflection would discover the iniquity and danger of their course.

And one would think nothing should be more obvious, or more readily occur to the mind of a man, than to contemplate himself, and taking notice there is such a Creature in the world, furnished with such abilities and powers to consider, What was I made for? What am I to pitch upon as my proper end? Nor any thing appear more horrid to him, than to cross the very ends of his Creation.

2. It may also be improv'd to the *directing* of our *Practice*. For which purpose we may hence take this general Rule, *That it be such as becomes the expectation of a future state*. For what else is left us, since in our present state we behold nothing but vanity?

We see thus stands our case, that we must measure our selves by one of these apprehensions, either [*we are made in vain,*] or [*we are made for a future state*]. And can we endure to live according to the former? As if we were impertinencies in the Creation, and had no proper business in it? What ingenuous person

son would not blush to be always in the posture of an useless hang-by; to be still hanging on, where he hath nothing to do; that if he be asked, Sir, what's your business here, he hath nothing to say?

Or how can we bear it, to live as if we came into the world by chance, or rather by mistake? As though our Creation had been a misadventure, a thing that would not have been done, had it been better thought on? And that our Maker had overshot himself, and been guilty of an oversight in giving us such a being? Who, that hath either just value for himself, or any reverence for his Maker, could endure either to undergo the reproach, or be guilty of the blasphemy which this would import? And who can acquit himself of the one or the other, that lives not in some measure agreeably to the expectation of somewhat beyond this present life? Let us therefore gird up the loins of our minds, and set our faces as persons designing for another world; so shaping our course, that all things may concur to signify to men the greatness of our expectations. We otherwise proclaim to the World (to our own and our Creators wrong) that we have reasonable Souls given us to no purpose. We are therefore concern'd and obliged both to aim at that worthy End, and to discover and make it visible that we do so.

Nor is a design for an immortal state so mean and inglorious, or so irrational and void of a solid ground, that we have any cause either to decline or conceal it; either

not to retain, or to be ashamed of our hope.

Nor is there any thing to be done in prostitution of it, so unworthy as to need a corner, or merit to be done as a work of darkness.

Neither yet is it a vain-glorious ostentation, or the affectation of making shew of an excellency above the vulgar pitch, that I perswade to: But a modest sober avowing of our high design and hope; neither making any near approach to a proud arrogance on the one hand, nor a mean pusillanimity on the other. Truly great and generous spirits know how to carry under secular Honour with that prudent and graceful *decorum*, as shall signifie a just owning of themselves without insolence towards others. Real worth, though it do not vaunt, will shew it self; and while it doth not glare, yet cannot forbear to shine.

We should endeavour the excellency of a spirit refin'd from earth and dross, and aspiring towards a state of immortality; may express it self, and shine in its *native lustre*; with its *own*, not with borrowed beams; with a constant, even, natural, not with an unequal artificial light. That all that will may see, by the steady tendency of our course, that we are aiming at the great things of another world. Though we all the while, are not so much solicitous to have our end and purpose known, as to obtain it.

And verily, since the vile sons of the earth, the men of sense, that aim at no other end than to gratifie their brutal appetite with such pleasure as is only to be compass'd within a short

life's.

life's-time in this world, and who live to the reproach of their Maker, and of mankind, do not go about to hide the infamy of their low design, or conceal the degenerate baseness of their mean spirits; but while they make their belly their God, and only mind earthly things, do also glory in their shame: How much were it beneath the state and spirit of the Sons of God, that are worthily designing for a glorious immortality, to be ashamed of their glory, or think of stealing a passage to Heaven in the dark?

No: Let them know, it is not only too mean a thing for them to involve themselves in the common spirit of the sensual world, but even to seem to do so: And that this is so foul and ignominious a thing, as whereof they are concern'd, not to be free from the guilt only, but the suspicion. Those worthy Souls that in former (and darker) days were engaged in seeking the Heavenly Country, thought it became them to confess themselves *pilgrims and strangers on the earth*; and therein to declare plainly, that they were seeking that better Country. Which confession and plain declaration we need not understand to be merely verbal, but practical and real also; such as might be understood to be the language of their lives, and of a constant uniform course of actions, agreeable to such a design.

Let us therefore bethink our selves, what temper of mind and manner of life may be most conformable to this design, and best become persons pretending to it: Whereupon

we should soon find our own thoughts instructing us, that such things as these would be most becoming and fit in reference thereto; and which we may therefore take as so many particular directions how to govern our spirits, and behave our selves answerably to so great an expectation.

I. That we endeavour for a calm indifferency and dispassionate temper of mind towards the various objects and affairs that belong to this present life. There are very narrow limits already set, by the nature of the things themselves, to all the real objective value that such things have in them: And it is the part of wisdom and justice, to set the proportionable bounds to all the thoughts, cares, and passions, we will suffer to stir in our minds in reference to them. Nothing is a more evident acknowledged Character of a Fool, than upon every slight occasion to be in a transport. To be much taken with empty things, betokens an empty spirit. It is a part of manly fortitude to have a Soul so fenc'd against foreign impressions, as little to be mov'd with things that have little in them. To keep our passions under a strict rein and steady command, that they be easily retractable and taught to obey. Not to move till severe Reason have audited the matter, and pronounc'd the occasion just and valuable. In which case the same manly temper will not refuse to admit a proportionable stamp and impress from the occurring object. For it is equally a prevarication from true manhood, to be mov'd with every thing and

and with nothing: The former would speak a mans spirit a feather, the latter a stone. A total apathy and insensibleness of external occurrents hath been the aim of some, but never the attainment of the highest pretenders. And if it had, yet ought it not to have been their boast; as upon sober thoughts it cannot be reckoned a perfection. But it should be endeavour'd, that the passions which are not to be rooted up (because they are of Nature's planting) be yet so discreetly check'd and deprest, that they grow not to that enormous tallness, as to over-top a mans intellectual power, and cast a dark shadow over his Soul.

A rational authority must be maintained, a continency and dominion of one's self, that there be not an impotent profusion, and we be never so affected with any thing, but that the object may still be able to warrant and justify the affection, both for the nature and degree of it.

Which Rule, if we strictly observe and apply it to the present case, we shall rarely meet with any temporal concern that ought to move us much; both for the littleness of such things themselves, and that we have so unspeakably greater things in our view and design.

In conformity therefore to our so great expectation, we ought more particularly to watch and repress our inclinations, appetites, and affections towards each several sort and kind of objects, which time and this present state hath within the confines of it. As,

How, contemptuously should we look upon
that

that empty vanity of being *rich*? How coldly and carelessly should we pursue, how unconcern'dly should we lose any thing that might intitle us to that Name?

The pursuit of so despicable a trifle, with violent and peremptory desire, so as hereby to suffer a diversion from our design for another world, is to make our eternal hope less than nothing, (for to any man's calm and sober thoughts, *this* will be found as little): And so will amount to a total quitting of all our pretensions to a (better) future state; that is, when we so indulge this odd irrational, this wildly fanciful, and purely humourfom appetite, (of which no man can give any tolerable account); that it becomes ravenous, when it devours a man's time, his thoughts, the strength and vigour of his spirit, swallows up his nobler designs, and makes an idle doting about he knows not what, or why, his main business.

Especially when Conscience it self becomes a sacrifice to this impure unhallowed Idol; and the question is wholly waved, Is this thing just and honest? and nothing is considered, but that it's commodious and gainful.

Yet, (if herein we will take upon us to pass a judgment upon other men), it will be no way ingenuous or just, that in smaller and disputable matters, we make our own apprehensions a measure and standard to them. They are commonly aptest to do so, who have least studied the matter, and have nothing but their ignorant confidence to intitle them to the

Dicta-

Dictator's Chair; where, however, having placed themselves, they liberally bestow their censures and reproaches on all that think it not fit to throw away their own eyes, and see with *their* bad ones. And conclude them to have no Conscience, who go not according to theirs. And that they cannot but have some base design, who in any thing presume to swerve from their judgment, especially if the advantage, in any temporal respect, happen to lie on that side from which they dissent.

Nothing can indeed so comport with the spirit and design of one who believes himself made for another world, as a brave and generous disdain of stooping to the lute of present emolument, so as thereby to be drawn into any the least thing which he judges not defensible by the severest Rules of Reason and Religion; which were to quit a serene Heaven for mire and dirt.

There is nothing in this World of that value, or worthy to be bought so dear, as with the loss and forfeiture of the rest and repose of a mind, quiet, benign, peaceful, and well-pleased with it self. It is enough, if one find himself, by difficulties which he cannot master, constrained to dissent from persons above exception wise and pious, placidly, and without unbecoming confidence, to go on in the way which his present judgment allows, carrying with him a modest sense of human infirmity, and how possible it is, the error may lie on his own part: Having yet to relieve him against
that

that supposition, the clearness of his own spirit, the conscience of his innocency of any ill disposition or design, of his instructibleness and preparedness to admit a conviction if he err. And be he never so fully perswaded about the thing in difference, yet to consider the smallness of it, and how little cause he hath of glorying, if he know in this matter more than others, who possibly know ten times more than he, in far greater and more important matters.

But, in matters clearly determined by common agreed Principles, to prevaricate out of an indulgence to meer appetite, to give up one self to practices apparently immoral and flagitious, only to comply with, and lest he should not satisfy sensual desires, is the Character of one who hath abandoned the common hope of all good men; and who, that he may have his lot with Beasts in this world, dreads not to have it with Devils in the other.

And it is upon the same ground, equally unbecoming them that pretend to this hope, to be visibly concern'd and compos'd for losses and disappointments they may meet with in this kind, when unexpected events withstand their having much of this world, or deprive them of what they have. It becomes them that reckon their good things are to come hereafter, to shew by their equal deportment and cheerful aspect in any such case, that they apprehend not themselves touch'd in their most considerable interests. Yea, though they suffer not losses only, but injuries; and besides that they are
dam'd

damnify'd (as much as such things can signify) they find themselves wrong'd; and though further trouble and danger threaten them in the same kind; they should evidence how much it is above the power either of chance or malice, not only to make them miserable, but even to disturb or make them sad: That they are not happy by a casualty: And that their happiness is not in the command of them who cannot command their own. That it only depends on the inward constitution and frame of their own spirits, attempered to the blessed objects of the invisible World, whereby they have the assurance of enjoying them fully hereafter, and the present grateful relishes thereof in the mean time: And hence, That they can be happy without the world's kindness, and in despite of its unkindness. That they have somewhat within them, by which they are enabled to rejoyce in tribulation; being troubled on every side, yet not to be distressed: *To take joyfully the spoiling of goods, knowing within themselves they have in heaven a better and enduring substance.* Not to suffer or discover any perturbation or disquiet. Not to have their Souls ruffled, or put into disorder: Nor let any Cloud sit on their brow, though dark and dismal ones seem to hang over their heads.

And the same absurdity it would be to indulge to themselves an unbounded liberty of sensual pleasures. For that looks like a despair of futurity; as if a day were a mighty gain for eating and drinking, because to morrow we must die. An abstemious shyness here is

com-

comely. A tasting only the delights, whereof others suffer themselves to be ingulf'd. A prudent reservedness and restraint, so as that what shall cause with others an unbecoming transport and diffusion of themselves, be entertain'd not with a Cynical morosity, but a pleasant composure and well-order'd complacency; keeping a due and even distance between levity and sourness.

Yet there is a natural retiredness in some mens tempers; and in others an aversion to pleasures, proceeding only of a rational estimate of their emptiness and vanity in themselves; which may, however, much fall short of what the present case requires: The exigency whereof is no way satisfied; but where such a moderation is the product of a comparative judgment between the delights of the present and those of the future state; When one so enjoys any thing in this World, as to be under the power of nothing, because of the more prevailing influence he is under from the power of the World to come: When his Faith is the Parent of his sobriety, and his denial of worldly lusts flows from the expectation of the blessed hope: When, because he more highly prizes, and lest he forfeit, eternal pleasures, he so behaves himself towards all temporary ones, as neither to abuse those that are lawful, nor to be abused by the unlawful; not to exceed in the one, nor to touch with the other.

Thus also ought we to look upon secular Honours and Dignity; neither to make them the matter of our admiration, affectation, or envy:

envy. We are not to behold them with a libidinous eye; or let our hearts thirst after them: Not to value our selves the more for them, if they be our lot; nor let our eye be dazzled with admiration, or distorted with envy, when we behold them the ornaments of others.

We are not to express that contempt of them, which may make a breach on civility, or disturb the order and policy of the Communities whereto we belong. Though this be none of our own Country, and we are still to reckon our selves but as Pilgrims and Strangers while we are here; yet it becomes not Strangers to be insolent or rude in their behaviour, where they sojourn; how much soever greater value they may justly have of their own Country. We should pay to secular Greatness a due respect, without Idolatry, and neither despise nor adore it; considering, at once, the requisiteness of such a thing in the present state, and the excelling glory of the other. As though in prudence and good manners we would abstain from provoking affronts towards an *American Sachin*, or *Sagamore*, if we did travel or converse in their Country; yet we could have no great veneration for them, having beheld the royal pomp and grandeur of our own Prince; especially he who were himself a Courtier and Favourite to his much more glorious Sovereign, whom he is shortly to attend at home. could have no great temptation to sue for Offices and Honours, or bear a very profound intrinsic homage to so mean and unexpressive an Image of Regality.

It

Rom. 2. 7.

It can surely no way become one who seeks and expects the *honour* and *glory* which is conjunct with *immortality*, to be fond of the airy titles that poor Mortals are wont to please themselves with ; or to make one among the obsequious servile company of them whose business it is to court a vanishing shadow ; and tempt a dignified trifle into the belief it is a Deity ; to sneak and cringe for a smile from a supercilious brow , and place his Heaven in the disdainful favours of him, who, it may be, places his own as much in thy homage, (so that it befalls into the Supplicant's power to be his Creator, whose Creature he affects to be). What eye would not soon spy out the grossness of this absurdity ? And what ingenuity would not blush to be guilty of it ? Let then the joyful expectants of a blessed immortality, pass by the busie throng of this fanciful Exchange ; and behold it with as little concern, as a grave States-man would the sports and ludicrous actions of little Children ; and with as little inclination of mind, as he would have to leave his business and go play with them ; bestowing there, only the transient glance of a careless or a compassionate eye, and still reserving their intent steady views for the glorious hope set before them.

And with a proportionable unconcernedness should they look on, and behold the various alternations of Political Affairs ; no further minding, either the constitution or administration of Government, than as the Interest of the universal Ruler, the weal and safety of their

their Prince or Country are concerned in them. But how many under the specious pretence of a publick spirit, make it their whole business to inspect and pry into these affairs, even with a most meanly private and interested one; watching over the Publick beyond the bounds of their own Calling; and with no other design, than to catch at an opportunity of serving their own turns! How many that stand perpetually at a gaze, in a suspenceful expectation how things will go; either joying or hoping to behold any favourable prognosticks to the Party whereto they have thought fit to addict themselves! Glad or desirous to see it ingross power, and grasp the sum of things, not from any sense of duties towards God's Vicegerents; not from love of Justice or study of publick advantage, but that the happier lot may befall or remain to themselves. These men are absorpt, and swallowed up of the spirit of this World, contemper'd only to this sublunary Region, concorporate with the earth, so as to partake in all its pangs and paroxysms, and tremulous motions. By the beating of their pulse you may know the state of things in this lower World, as if they were of the same piece, and had but one Soul with it. Let them see times and a state of things on earth suitable to their genius, and you put a new life and soul into them. Reduce them to a despair here, and (so little communion have they with the affairs of that other Countrey) the most specious inviting representation that can be made to them of the world to come hinders not, but their

hearts languish and die, and become as stones within them.

But that lofty Soul that bears about with it the living apprehensions of its being made for an everlasting state, so earnestly intends it, that it shall ever be a descent and vouchsafement with it, if it allow it self to take notice what busie mortals are doing in their (as they reckon them) grand negotiations here below. And if there be a suspicion of an aptness, or inclination to intermeddle in them to their prejudice to whom that part belongs, can heartily say to it, (as the Philosopher to the jealous Tyrant), *We of this Academy are not at leisure to mind so mean things: We have somewhat else to do than to talk of you.* He hath still the image before his eye, of this world vanishing and passing away; of the other, with the everlasting affairs and concernments of it, even now ready to take place and fill up all the stage: And can represent to himself the vision (not from a melancholick fancy or crazed brain, but a rational faith and a sober well-instructed mind), of the World dissolving, Monarchies and Kingdoms breaking up, Thrones tumbling, Crowns and Scepters lying as neglected things. He hath a Telescope through which he can behold the glorious appearance of the Supreme Judg; The solemn state of his Majestick Person; The splendid pomp of his magnificent and vastly numerous Retinue; The obsequious Throng of glorious Cœlestial Creatures, doing homage to their Eternal King; The swift flight of his royal Guards, sent forth into the four Winds

to

to gather the Elect, and covering the face of the Heavens with their spreading Wings; The universal silent attention of all to that loud-sounding Trumpet that shakes the pillars of the World, pierces the inward caverns of the Earth, and resounds from every part of the incircling Heavens; The many Myriads of joyful Expectants arising, changing, putting on glory, taking wing, and contending upwards, to join themselves to the triumphant heavenly Host; The Judgment set; The Books opened; The frightful amazed looks of surprised Wretches; The equal administration of the final Judgment; The adjudication of all to their eternal states; The Heavens roll'd up as a scroll; the Earth and all things therein consumed and burnt up.

And now, what spirit is there any more left in him towards the trivial affairs of a vanishing world? How indifferent a thing is it with him who bears himself highest in a state of things whereof he foresees the certain hastning end? Though he will not neglect the duty of his own place, is heartily concerned to have the knowledg and fear of God more generally obtained in this apostate World; and is ready to contribute his utmost regular endeavours for the preservation of common peace and order in subserviency hereto. Yet abstractedly from these considerations, and such as have been beforementioned, he is no more concerned who is uppermost, than one would, passing by a swarm of Flies, which hath the longest wings, or which excels the rest in sprightliness or

briskness of motion. And for himself, he can insert this amongst his most serious thanksgivings, That while the care is incumbent on others, of watching over the publick peace and safety, he may sit still and converse with God and his own more sedate thoughts. How secure is he in this, That infinite Wisdom governs the World ! That all things shall be disposed the best way, to the best and most valuable ends ! That an afflicted state shall never befall unto good men, but when it is fittest and most conducive it should do so ! That the prosperity carnal appetite covets, is never denied them, but when it would be pernicious ! How calm is he in the midst of external troubles ! How placid and serene a spirit inhabits his peaceful breast ! When all things are shaken round about him, he is not shaken. He bears all sorts of troubles, but creates none to others, nor is disturbed by any himself.

But they that delight to see this world rolling or fixed, as may most serve their private purposes, and have a perpetual quarrel with it, while it looks not kindly upon them ; Their life is bound up in it, and their pretences to another, are but the languid faint notions of what they never heartily believe nor desire.

Upon the whole matter : Nothing is more agreeable to this great expectation, than a steady restraint and moderation of our passions towards things without us ; that is, all the several sorts of external objects and affairs, that so variously invite and tempt our observation

vation and regard in this our present state.

2. I next add: a further congruity, if we pretend to this expectation, is, *That we be not over-much taken up in minding the body.* For this looks like a design (or that inconsistent wish) to have our present state perpetuated; and that the thoughts are remote from us of a change for a better. As if notwithstanding all that the Divine Goodness hath promised concerning the future inheritance of the free and heaven-born seed, this did still lie nearest to our hearts, *O that Ishmael might live in thy sight!* And that the belief did miserably languish with us, of any better portion than what our eyes do already behold; Together with the apprehension of a spiritual being in us, to be ripened into a compleat and actual capacity of enjoying what is better. It is true, that all the exorbitant workings of those meaner and ignoble passions that are moved by objects and occasions without and foreign to us, have the body for their first and last, their spring and source, their center and end. But thence it becomes the more proper and requisite, that we draw nearer this their seat and center, and strike at the root; and in killing that inordinate love and solicitude for the body, mortifie them all at once.

We are indeed so far to comply with the pleasure of our Maker, as not to despise the mean abode which he hath assigned us for a while in the body. But withal, to take heed lest we so cross and resist it, as to make caring for the body our whole business; which he

hath only enjoin'd us in subserviency to an unspeakably greater and more important business. Its health and welfare ought upon very valuable accounts to be carefully preserved by all prudent means: But to indulge its slothful desires, and comply with its licentious wild cravings, is far beneath us, a base unmanning of our selves, and would signifie, as if so absurd a conceit had past with us into a settled judgment, That a reasonable immortal spirit was created only to tend and serve a Brute. It is monstrous to behold, with how common consent multitudes that professedly agree in the belief of the immortal nature of their Souls, do yet agree to debase and enslave them to the meanest servility to their mortal bodies; so as these are permitted to give Laws to them, to prescribe them rules of living, and what their daily employment shall be. For observe the designs they drive, and what is the tendency of their actions and affairs (whence the judgment is to be made concerning their inward thoughts, deliberations, and resolves), and is not the Body the measure and mark of them all? What import or signification is there in this course, of a design for futurity? And (which increases the folly of it to a wonder) they can make a shift to go on thus from year to year, and take no notice of the absurdity! They agree to justify each one himself, and one another. The commonness of the course takes away all sense of the horrid madness of it. And because each doth as the rest do, they seem to imagine they all do well, and

and that there is nothing exceptionable in the case; and go on * (as the silly sheep), not the way they ought, but which they see others go before them.

* Non quæ
rundum est
sed qua
itur. Sen.

But, if any place could be found for calm and sober thoughts, What would be reckon'd a greater impertinency, than to be at so great pains for maintaining a bodily life, without considering what that life shall serve for? To employ our utmost care to live, but to live for we know not what? It becomes us to be patient of the body, not fond. To treat and use our bodies as things shortly to be put off and laid aside. To care for them, not for their own, but the works sake we have to do in them: And leave it to them to indulge and pamper the body, who expect never to live out of it. Not to concern our selves, that the circumstances of our bodily state be such as will gratifie our appetites, but answer the ends for which our Maker thought fit we should live a while in the body. Reckoning with our selves, We are lodg'd in these mean receptacles (though somewhat commodiously, yet) but for a little while, and for great purposes, and more minding our journey and home, than our entertainment in our Inn. Contentedly bearing the want of bodily accommodations, that are not easily to be compass'd, and the pressure of unavoidable bodily infirmities; not much pitying our selves because of them; nor deeply regretting it, if wants and pains pinch our flesh; nay, though we see the outward man perishing, so we can but find the inward renewing day by day.

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3. That we set our selves with the whole intention of our Souls, to mind the concerns of the future state, the invisible things of the other world; and direct the main stream of our thoughts, desires, hopes, and joys, thitherward. For how highly justifiable and becoming is it, that we principally mind the state and things we were made for? We should therefore make these familiar to our selves, and use our spirits to those more noble and pleasant Theams: Recounting often, how unworthy it is of them to grovel in the dust, or chuse the objects of their converse by such measures only as are taken from sense.

It is an iniquity which, though God may be so gracious to us as to forgive, we should not easily forgive to our selves, That we have so often chosen to converse with empty trifles, while so great things have invited our thoughts in vain.

Their remoteness from sense hath little of excuse in it, and unworthy a reasonable Creature. Methinks they should be ashamed to alledg it, who consider themselves furnished with an intellectual power, that doth, in many other instances, controll the judgment of sense, and impeach it of falshood. Would we not blush to profess it for a Principle, That there is nothing real that exceeds the sphere of our sense?

We would reckon it a part of modesty not to ascribe too much to our own understandings, or presume too far upon our intellectual ability, against the judgment of sage and knowing persons. How is it then, that we think it not immodest, to oppose the apprehensions

hensions of our dull and incapacious sense to the common faith and reason of all good and wise men, that are or have been in the world, as well as our own? If we have not seen what the state of things is in the other world, are we not told? And have we not enough to assure us, that 'tis He hath told us, whose nature cannot suffer him to impose upon us, or represent things otherwise than they are? Who else can be the Author of so common a perswasion? If any man had been the first Inventor of the opinion, *That there is another state of things to succeed to this*, Would he not have assumed it to himself, that he was so? Would he not have own'd it, and glory'd in it? Or would not some or other of his profelyted disciples have preserved his name and memory, and transmitted them to posterity? Could so vast a Sect be without an Head or Master, known and celebrated among men?

Less plausible opinions find some Owners: Why is it not said, Who was the first Broacher of this? And if he can find no other Parent for it, but He who was the Parent of our beings, How grateful should such a discovery be to us, both for his sake and its own? Upon His account, we should surely think it worthy to be believed; and upon its own, to be considered and seriously thought on, with greatest delight and sense of pleasure.

Many things that we reckon considerable upon much lower accounts, we so believe, as to let them engage our hearts, and influence our practice, upon much lower evidence. How
entirely

intirely are mens spirits taken up many times about meaner matters, whereof they have only a (much more uncertain and fallible) report from one another? What pretence can we have, less to regard the testimony of Him that made us, discovering to us things so great, so important, so rational in themselves, even though they had not been so expressly revealed? Let us therefore drive the matter to a clear and short issue, and come to a resolution with our selves; Have we reason to believe such things, or no? If we can so far impose upon our selves, as to think we have not; or be tempted into so abject, so unrequired, and so unwarrantable a self-denial, so base an esteem of our own beings, as to account the things of this earth and present world have enough in them to answer any ends we can suppose our selves made for; Let us no longer mock the world, by pretending to believe what we believe not. But if this be our settled judgment, and we will avow and own it, That we believe these things; Let us no longer expose and make our selves ridiculous, by counter-acting our own professed belief in matters of such moment, pretending to believe and disregarding them at the same time. 'Tis absurd and foolish, to believe such things and not mind them much, or not let our Souls and our practice be commanded and governed by them: Not to have our desires, and cares, and hopes, and joys, influenc'd thereby to the uttermost. How rational is it, here to be deeply solicitous, that by the unsutableness of our own spirits we defeat not our own expectations!

tions! How pleasant and delectable (that danger being provided against), to sit down and compare our present with our expected state, what we are, with what we hope to be ere long! To think of exchanging shortly, infirmity, pollution, darkness, deformity, trouble, complaint; for power, purity, light, beauty, rest, and praise! How pleasant, if our spirits be fitted to that state! The endeavour whereof is a further congruity in the present case, viz.

4. That we make it our principal business to intend our spirits, to adorn and cultivate our inward man. What can more become us, if we reckon we have somewhat about us made for immortality, than to bestow our chief care upon that immortal part? Therefore, to neglect our spirits, confessedly capable of so high an estate, to let them languish under wasting distempers, or lie as the sluggards field, overgrown with thorns and briars, is as vile a slur as we can put upon our selves and our own profession.

We should therefore make this the matter of our earnest study. What would be the proper improvements and ornaments of our spirits, and will most fitly qualifie them for the state we are going into; and of our daily observation how such things thrive and grow in us. Especially, we should not be satisfied, till we find in our selves a refinedness from this earth, a thorough purgation from all undue degrees of sensual inclination and affection, the consumption of our dross by a sacred fire from

from Heaven, a spirit of judgment and of burning, an aptitude to spiritual exercises and enjoyments, high complacency in God, fervent love, a worshipping posture of Soul, formed to the veneration of the eternal wisdom, goodness, power, holiness; profound humility and abnegation of our selves, a praiseful frame of spirit, much used to gratulations and thank-givings, a large and universal love, imitating as much as is possible the Divine, a proneness to do good to all, a steady composure and serene temper of spirit, the repose and rest of a contented mind, not boisterous, not apt unto disquiet, or to create storms to our selves or the World, every way suitable to the blissful Regions, where nothing but perfect purity, entire devotedness to God, love, goodness, benignity, well-pleasedness, order, and peace, shall have place for ever.

This we ought to be constantly intent upon, as the business of our lives, our daily work, to get our spirits so attuned and fitted to Heaven, that if we be asked, What design we drive? What are we doing? We may be able to make this true answer, We are dressing our selves for Eternity. And since nothing is required hereto, that is simply impossible, nothing but what is agreeable to our natures, and would be a perfection to them; How worthy and commendable an ambition were it, to be always aspiring? not to rest or take up beneath the highest pitch of attainable excellency in these kinds? reckoning every degree thereof a due to our natures, and that they have

have not what belongs to them, while any thing of real intrinsic moral goodness is yet wanting; and not only due, but necessary, and what we shall have need of in reference to the state we are shortly to enter upon; that *except such things be in us, and abound, we cannot have an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom.*

And should we, pretending to such an expectation, omit such endeavours of preparing our selves, it were alike thing as if an unbred Peasant should go about to thrust himself, with an expectation of high Honours and Preferments, into the Prince's Court; or as if a distracted man should expect to be employed in the greatest and most intricate affairs of State; or an uninstructed Idiot take upon him to profess and teach Philosophy.

Therefore let us consider: Are we conscious of no unfitness for that blessed state? To dwell in the presence of the holy God? To be associated with the heavenly Assembly of pure intellectual Spirits? To comfort and join with them in their celebrations and triumphant songs? Can we espy no such thing in our selves, as an earthly mind, aversation to God, as pride, disdain, wrath, or envy, admiration of our selves, aptness to seek our own things with the neglect of others, or the like? And do not our hearts then misgive, and tell us we are unready, not yet prepared to approach the Divine Presence, or to enter into the habitation of his Holiness and Glory? And what then have we to do, but set our selves to our
prepa-

preparatory work ; to set our watches, make
 our observations, take strict notice of all the
 deflexions and obliquities of our spirits, set-
 tle our methods, and hasten a redress? Do
 not we know this is the time and state of pre-
 paration? And since we know it, how would
 the folly torture us, by reflection, of having
 betrayed our selves to a surprisal! None are
 ever wont to enter upon any new state with-
 out some foregoing preparation. Every more
 remarkable turn or change in our lives, is com-
 monly (if at all foreknown) introduced by
 many serious fore-thoughts. If a man be to
 change his dwelling, employment, condition,
 common discretion will put him upon think-
 ing how to comport with the place, business,
 converse, and way of living he is next to be-
 take himself to. And his thoughts will be the
 more intense, by how much more momentous
 the change. If he be to leave his Country, with
 no probability of returning; if he be design-
 ed to a station, the circumstances whereof car-
 ry any thing of awfulness in them; if to pub-
 lick business, if on Court-attendances, With
 what solemnity and address are such things
 undertaken! How loth and ashamed would
 one be, to go into such a condition, being to-
 tally unapt, not at all knowing how to behave
 himself in it! But what so great change as this
 can the nature of man admit, That a Soul,
 long shut up in flesh, is now to go forth from
 its earthly Mansion, and return no more; ex-
 pecting to be received into the glorious Pre-
 sence of the eternal King, and go act its part
 among

among the perfected spirits that attend His Throne ! How solicitous endeavour of a very thorough preparation doth this case call for !

But how ill doth the common course of men agree to this, who never have such matters in their thoughts, who so much neglect not their very Hogs, as they do their Spirits !

5. That we have much conversation with God. He is the only full and permanent Good ; therefore the endeavour of becoming very inward with him, doth best agree with the expectation of a state perfectly good and happy.

To expect this, and converse only with shadows and vanishing things, is to expect to be happy without a happiness ; or that our happiness should betide us as a casual thing, or be forc'd upon us at last whether we will or no. But since our happiness in God is on his part not necessary, but vouchsafed and gratuitous, depending on meer good pleasure ; Is it our best way of ingratiating our selves with him, to neglect him and live as without him in the world ; to keep our selves strangers to him all our days, with a purpose only of flying to him at last, when all things else that were wont to please us are vanished and gone : And if we could suppose his Wisdom and Justice to admit his forgiving so provoking contempt of him, and receiving an exiled Soul forced out of its earthly abode, that to the last moment of it would never look after him, or have to do with him ; yet can it

be supposed, that its own habitual averſation to him could allow it to be happy in him? Eſpecially being increaſed and confirmed by its conſciouſneſs and ſenſe of guilt? How can theſe but make it baniſh it ſelf, and in a ſullen enmity and deſpair perpetually flee the Divine Preſence? What can in this caſe be more natural to it, than to give up it ſelf to eternal ſolitary wandrings, as a Fugitive from God; to affect to be ever enwrapt in its own darkneſs, and hidden from his ſight; and be an everlaſting tormentor to it ſelf? Can we be happy in him whom we do not love; or love whom we will not know, or be acquainted with?

What ſure ground of hope can we imagine to our ſelves, that our reconciliation and acquaintance with God ſhall ever be brought about, if it be not done while we are here in the body? Will we be ſo vain, as to cheriſh an hope that not only affronts the viſible import of Gods revelation, but the very reaſon of things, and the natural tendency of our own ſpirits? Nor indeed (if we would conſider better) can we poſſibly hope for what we deſire not, or whereto our hearts are in an habitual diſaffection, otherways than (in the preſent caſe) negatively, and that our infidelity permits us not to fear the contrary: Yea, and the lively hope of a bleſſedneſs in God, as it includes deſire, would certainly infer that purity (the image of his own) that could never fail to incline our hearts to him, and which would habituate us to a courſe of walk-

walking with him in inward communion.

And this were comely and agreeable to our pretences, If while we profess our selves made for another state, we retire our selves from the fading things that put a vanity into this, and single out, by our own choice, the stable good which we expect ever to enjoy. How befitting is it, to pass by all things with neglect, and betake our selves hither with this sense ?

Lord, I have viewed the World over, in which thou hast set me ; I have tried how this and that thing will fit my spirit and the design of my Creation ; and can find nothing in which to rest, for nothing here doth it self rest, but such things as please me for a while, in some degree, vanish and flee as shadows from before me. Lo, I come to Thee, the Eternal Being, the Spring of Life, the Center of rest, the Stay of the Creation, the Fulness of all things ! I join my self to thee, with thee I will lead my life and spend my days, with whom I am to dwell for ever, expecting when my little time is over to be taken up ere long into thy Eternity.

And since we, who live under the Gospel, have heard of the Redeemer, of the dignity of his Person, of his high Office and Power, of his merciful design and great achievements for the restoring of lapsed and lost Souls.

It is most agreeable to our apprehensions of the vanity of this present state, and our expectations for the future, that we commit our selves to him : That with intire trust and love, devotedness and subjection, we give our selves up to his happy conduct, to be led by him to

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God, and inflated into that eternal blessedness which we look for.

His Kingdom is not of this world (as we profess not to be.) We cannot be innocently ignorant, that its constitution and frame, its laws and ordinances, its aspect and tendency in its self, and the whole course of its administration, are directed to that other state. *He hath overcome death, and him that had the power of it; hath brought life and immortality to light, is the first begotten from the dead, and the first fruits of them that slept; hath opened Heaven to us, and is himself ascended and entred as our victorious triumphant Captain and Forerunner. He is adorned with highest Power, and hath set up an Universal Kingdom extended to the utmost bounds of this apostate World, and the vaster Regions of innocent and constantly loyal Spirits. His Proclamations are issued out, his Ensigns display'd to invite and call in whosoever are weary of the sin and vanity of this wretched world, of their alienation from the life of God, of living in the midst of death; to join themselves to Him, the Prince and Lord of Life, and be led by Him to the immortal state. If the present state of things appear dismal to us; if we reckon it a woful spectacle to behold sin and death reigning, wickedness and mortality acting their combined parts, to waste the world and lay it desolate; if we would deliver our selves and escape from the common ruin, are seriously desirous for Heaven, and that World in which Death hath no place, nor any shadow of Death;*
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Let us betake our selves to Him, enroll our Names, put our selves under his Banners and Discipline, strictly observing the Laws and following the guidance of that our invisible Lord, who will be *Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him*, and save to the utmost all that come to God through him. How dear should he be to us! How chearfully should we trust him, how dutifully serve him, how faithfully adhere to him, both for his own sake, and that of the design he hath in hand for us, and the pleasant favour of Heaven and Immortality which breathes in both!

But if we neglect Him, and disown our relation to him; or if we let days and years go over our heads, wherein we drowsily slumber; roll our selves in the dust of the earth; and while we call our selves Christians, forget the reason and importance of our own Name, and think not of our being under his call and conduct to the eternal Kingdom and Glory. This is perversly to reject what we say (only) we seek; to disclaim and renounce our pretences to Immortality; to blast and damn our own great hopes.

Lastly, It is congruous to our expectation of so great things after death, That we live in a chearful pleasant expectation of it. For what must necessarily intervene, though not grateful in it self, should be reckon'd so, for the sake of that which is. This only can upon the best terms reconcile us to the grave, That our greatest hopes lie beyond it, and are not hazarded by it, but accomplish'd.

Although, indeed, nothing were to be expected

pected hereafter; yet so little futable entertainment doth this world afford to a reasonable spirit, that the meer weariness of beholding a Scene of vanity and folly, might well make a recess acceptable. For is it so grateful a thing to observe the confused scramble and hurry of the World? How almost every one makes it his business to catch from another what is worth nothing! With what toil, and art, and violence men pursue, what when they embrace they find a shadow! To see deluded Mortals, each one intent upon his own particular design, and most commonly interfering with anothers: Some impos'd upon by others over-reaching wit, and all by their own folly: Some lamenting their losses, others their short and unsatisfying acquisitions: Many pleasing themselves with being mockt, and contentedly hugging the empty Cloud, till Death comes and ends the story, and ceases the busie agitation; that is, with so many particular persons, not with the world. A new succretion still springing up, that continue the interlude, and still act over the same parts, *ad radium usque!*

What serious person, who that is not in love with impertinency and foolery, would much regret it, to close his eyes, to have the Curtains drawn, and bid good-night to the world, without ever wishing to see the morning of such another day? And even they that have the world most in their power, and can command what they please for the gratifying of their appetites, without the contradiction and controll of others, What can they enjoy more

more to morrow than they did yesterday ; or the next year than this ? Is it so much worth the while to live, to see a few more persons bow the knee ? To extend power a little further ? To make another essay, what pleasure sense can taste in some or other hitherto unexperimented rarity ? What more peculiar gusto this or that thing will afford ; and try the other Dish ? Or to renew the same relishes over again ?

He whose creative fancy could make him golden Mountains in a Dream, create him a Prince of Nations, give him to enjoy the most delicious pleasures of the World in Idea, might, with some plausible shew of reason, be deem'd the happier man, than he that hath and is all this indeed : For his toil is less, and his victories unbloody, his pleasures not so impure. However, one would think, that to such whose utmost attainments end only in the pleasure of their sense, and have but this Epiphonema, *Now let us sit down, eat, drink, and be merry* ; A little time might suffice for business of no more weight ; and that no man, after he hath once seen the course of the world and tasted of its best delicacies, should greatly wish for a renewal or long-continued repetition of so fulsom vanities.

But the most find not the world so kind, and are not so much exercised in the innovating of pleasures as miseries, (changes being their only remedies, as the Moralist speaks) ; or in bearing (more sadly) the same every days burden ; and drawing out the series of

their calamities in the same kind through the whole course of their time.

And surely, these things considered, there wants not what might persuade a Sceptick, or even a perfect Infidel, as to another world, not much to be in love with this.

For upon the whole, let but the case be thus put; Is it not as good to do nothing, as to be busie to no purpose? And again, Is it not as good to be nothing, as to be and do nothing? Sober reason would judg, at least, there were but little odds.

But now; If such considerations as have been mentioned, would suffice to state the matter in *equilibrio*, to make the scales even; ought the rational sober belief of a blessed immortality do nothing to turn the ballance? Ought the love of God to do nothing? The desire and hope of a state perfectly good and happy, quiet and peaceful, of living in the Region of undefiled innocent love and pleasure; in the communion of holy and blessed spirits, (all highly pleased, not in their own only, but one anothers happiness; and all concentrating in the admiration and praise of their common Parent and Lord); Ought all this nothing to alter the case with us; or signifie nothing to the inclining our minds to the so unpeackable better part?

Methtinks since we acknowledg such an order of intelligent (and already happy) Creatures, we should even blush to think they should be spectators of our daily course and (too plainly discovered) inclinations; to dis-

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form and unagreeable to all the Laws and dictates of reasonable nature? What censures, may we think, do they pass upon our follies? Are those things great in their eyes, that are so in ours? In lesser matters (as some interpret that passage) indecencies are to be avoided, because of those blessed Spirits. May we not then be ashamed, that they should discern our terrene dispositions; and see us come so unwillingly into their comfort and happy state? Although our present depressing circumstances will not suffer us to be in all things, as yet, conformable to their high condition, we should however carry it as Candidates thereto, studying to approve our selves, waiting and longing to be transum'd and taken up into it.

Cor. 3.

And since we have so high and great an expectation, and 'tis understood and known, That the very perfection and end of our beings is no otherwise attainable, than by putting off our sordid flesh, and laying aside this earthly appurtenance; that yet there should be so fixed and prevailing an aversion to it, is a most unaccountable thing, and one of the greatest Problems in Nature.

I say, prevailing: For admit, what is like to be alledg'd, that an addictedness to the body is by natural inclination; Ought not the Laws of a Superior to prevail over those of the inferior nature? And is not the love of God a higher natural Law than that of the body; to whom here our service is little, yea our disservice much; and from whose most

desireable commerce we suffer so uncomfortable a disclusion by the sad circumstances of our bodily state? Are we more nearly ally'd to a piece of Clay, than to the Father of our spirits? And again, Is not every thing nearest to it self; and obliged to place love there, rather than on any inferiour thing (at least) how nearly soever united; since there can be no pretence of any such nearer union, than of a thing with it self? And are not our Souls and our Bodies (though united, yet) distinct things? Why then should not our Souls, that are capable of understanding their own interest, mind that first, intend most their own perfection and improvement, and begin their charity at home? It is not strange, that what is weaker and more ignoble, should affect union with what is above it, and a spring of life to it: But when it is found burdensom, nothing forbids, but that the superior Being may be well content, upon fair and allowable terms, to be rid of the burden. Therefore, though flesh and blood may reluctate and shrink at it, when we think of laying it down; yet it becomes immortal spirits, to consider their own affairs, and be (more principally) intent upon what will be their own advantage. If so mean a Creature as a forry Flea, finding it can draw a sutable aliment from our bodies, affect to dwell there, and is loth to leave us; It were a ludicrous pity to be therefore content to endure its troublesome vellications, because we fear the poor Animal should be put to its shifts, and

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not be otherwise able to find a subsistence. 'Tis true, that the great Creator and Lord of the Universe, hath not permitted us the liberty of so throwing off our bodies when we will, (which otherwise are in dignity far more beneath our spirits than so despicable a Creature is beneath *them*. And to his dispose that hath order'd this conjunction for a time (whether we look upon it as an effect of his simple pleasure, or of his displeasure) we must yield an awful and a patient submission, till this part of his Providence towards us have run its course and attain'd its ends. And then, how welcome should the hour of our discharge and freedom be, from so troublesome an Associate! Which upon no other account, than that of duty towards the Author of our beings, one would more endure; than to have the most noisom offensive Vermin always preying upon his flesh. At least, (though the consideration of our own advantage had no place with us in this matter), the same sense of duty towards our great Creator, which should make us patient of an abode in the body while he will have it so, should also form our spirits to a willing departure when it shall be his pleasure to release us thence. But, that neither a regard to his pleasure, nor our own blessedness, should prevail against our love to the body, is the unaccountable thing I speak of. And to plead only, in the case, the corruption of our natures that sets us at odds with God and our selves, is to justify the thing

thing by what is it self most unjustifiable; or rather (as some that have affected to be styl'd Philosophers have been wont to expedite difficulties, by resolving the matter into the usual course of nature) to resolve the thing into it self, and say, *It is so, because it is so, or is wont to be*; and indeed, plainly to confess there is no account to be given of it. This being the very thing about which we expostulate, That reasonable nature should so prevaricate. The commonness whereof doth not take away the wonder, but rather render it more dreadful and astonishing.

The truth is, the incongruity in the present case is only to be solved by redress; by earnest strivings with God, and our own Souls, till we find our selves recovered into a right mind; into the constitution and composition whereof a generous fortitude hath a necessary ingredient; that usually upon lower motives refuses no change of Climate, and will carry a man into unknown Countries, and through greatest hazards in the pursuit of honourable enterprizes, of a much inferior kind.

It is reckon'd a brave and manly thing, to be in the temper of one's mind a Citizen of the World, (meaning it of this lower one); But why not rather of the Universe? And 'tis accounted mean and base, that one should be so confin'd by his fear or sloth to that spot of ground where he was born, as not upon just inducement to look abroad, and go for warrantable and worthy purposes (yea, if it were

were only honest self-advantage) as far as the utmost ends of the earth : But dare we not venture a little farther ? These are too narrow bounds for a truly great spirit. Any thing that is tinctur'd with earth , or savours of mortality, we should reckon too mean for us ; and not regret it, that Heaven and immortality are not to be attained but by dying ; so should the love of our own Souls, and the desire of a perpetual state of life, triumph over the fear of death.

But it may be alledged by some, That 'tis only a solicitous love to their Souls, that makes them dread this change. They know it will not fare with all alike hereafter, and know not what their own lot shall be.

And is this indeed our case ? Then, what have we been doing all this while ? And how are we concerned to lose no more time ?

But too often a terrene spirit lurks under this pretence ; and men alledge their want of assurance of Heaven, when the love of this earth (which they cannot endure to think of leaving) holds their hearts.

And, (a little to discuss this matter), What would we have to assure us ? Do we expect a vision or a voice ? Or are we not to try our selves ; and search for such characters in our own Souls , as may distinguish and note us out for Heaven ? Among these, what can be more clear and certain than this, *that we have our hearts much set upon it ?* They that have their conversations in Heaven, may from thence expect the Saviour , *who shall change their vile bodies*

Phil. 3. 20.
21.

67. *bodies (the bodies of their humiliation, or low abject state), and make them like his own glorious body.*

Rom. 2. 6, *God, who will render to every man according to his works, will give them that by patient*

7. *continuance in well-doing seek honour and glory and immortality, eternal life. They that set*

Col. 3. 2, *their affections (or minds) on the things above,*
3. 4. *not those on the earth; when Christ shall appear, who is their life, shall appear with him in glory.*

Mistake not the notion of Heaven, or the blessedness of the other world; render it not to your selves a composition of sensual enjoyments; Understand it (principally) to consist in perfect holiness and communion with God, (as his own word represents it, and as reason hath taught even some Pagans to reckon of it); and you cannot judge of your own Right by a surer and plainer Rule, than that eternal Blessedness shall be theirs, whose hearts are truly bent and directed towards it. Admit we, then, this Principle; and now let us reason with our selves from it: We have a discovery made to us of a future state of blessedness in God, not as desirable only in it self, but as attainable and possible to be enjoyed, (the Redeemer having opened the way to it by his blood, and given us, at once, both the prospect and the offer of it), so that it is before us as the object of a reasonable desire. Now either our hearts are so taken with this discovery, that we above all things desire this state; or not. If they be, we desire it more than our earthly stations and enjoyments, and

and are willing to leave the world and the body to enjoy it; and so did falsly accuse our selves of a prevailing aversion to this change. If they be not, the thing is true, that we are upon no terms willing to die: But the cause is falsly (or partially) assigned. It is not so much because we are unassured of Heaven, but (as was above suspected) because we love this world better, and our hearts center in it as our most desirable good.

Therefore we see how unreasonably this is often said, We are unwilling to change states, because we are unassured. The truth is, they are unassured, because they are unwilling; and what then ensues? They are unwilling because they are unwilling. And so they may endlessly dispute themselves round, from unwillingness to unwillingness. But is there no way to get out of this unhappy Circle? In order to it, let the case be more fully understood: Either this double unwillingness must be refer'd to the same thing, or to divers: If to the same thing, it is not sense; they say what signifies nothing; for being to assign a cause of their unwillingness to quit the body, to say, *because they are unwilling*, (*viz.* of that), is to assign no cause, for nothing can be the cause of it self: But if they refer to divers things, and say, *They are unwilling to go out of the body; because they are unwilling to forsake Earth for Heaven*; The case is then plain, but sad, and not alterable, but with the alteration of the temper of their spirits. Wherefore let us all apply our selves (since with none

none this is so fully done, that no more is
 needful) to the serious endeavour of getting
 our Souls purged from the dross of this world,
 and enamoured of the purity and blessedness
 of Heaven, so the cause and effect will vanish
 together; we shall find that suitableness and
 inclination in our spirits to that blessedness
 as may yield us the ground of a comfortable
 persuasion that it belongs to us; and then,
 not be unwilling, though many deaths stood
 in our way, to break through to attain it.

F I N I S .

HOMER'S {Vocabulary of Words and Phrases} {Illustrations of the Language}